MEMORIAL
OF
Mrs. AGNES RENTON

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MEMORIAL

To Mrs Archer

with very kind regards

H.R.

Memorial

OF

MRS. AGNES RENTON.

For the Private Use of her Family.

Renton, Henry

"Let all that you approved of in my character live in you in *a seven-fold degree.*"

From her Posthumous Letter, p. 143.

1866

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TO

WILLIAM RENTON,

THE

MOST RETICENT AND RETIRING,

BUT

MOST DILIGENT AND DISINTERESTED,

AND IN FILIAL DUTY

MOST FAITHFUL AND EXEMPLARY,

OF HER SONS,

THIS MEMORIAL OF

OUR MOTHER

IS INSCRIBED

AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY

BY

HIS ELDER BROTHER.

PREFACE.

Of all the fellow-creatures with whom we are connected in the course of life, our parents have the first claim upon our affectionate interest. Through them God gave us being; and when they have been spared to us, and have kindly and faithfully fulfilled their duties, we are, under God, indebted to *them* for our provision, protection, education, and all the social and religious advantages of our early life. The relation in which they stood to us, and its manifold influences, have had, in most cases, an unconscious, perhaps, but mighty power in the formation of our sentiments, tastes, habits, and character, and, it may be, also in the determination of our pursuits and of our position in the world. They have the greater claims upon our gratitude and remembrance when they have been marked by

high qualities of any kind, and especially by those of a moral and spiritual nature—the virtues and the graces—which, as oft as we revert to them, appear ever, like the stars in the firmament, undiminished in brightness and beauty, and which, when the glare and the excitement of worldly fashion and favour and pleasure, that at any time dazzle and captivate us, have passed away, contrast to our sober reflection as, ah! how different and superior in their nature—how elevating and purifying in their influence—how pleasant, satisfying, and holy in their retrospect, and how worthy of our study and imitation! It is finely said by the Rev. Robert Hall, "that the friendship of sanctified spirits loses nothing by death but its alloy; failings disappear, and the virtues of those whose faces we shall behold no more appear greater and more sacred when beheld through the shades of the sepulchre."

These considerations would justify some record of my mother's life and character, for preservation among her children and for transmission to their descendants. But I feel that other reasons require this at my hand. She left two letters

addressed to her children, under written directions that they were not to be opened until after her death, which, from their solemn and weighty nature, and as designed for the spiritual and permanent benefit of her family, it seems to me proper to put into a printed form, for their easier and oftener perusal, and for their surer and better preservation. She also left an account of her daughter Rachel, drawn up shortly after the death of that remarkable and saintly child, which she did *not* design to print or transmit in the form in which she prepared it, but gave to me shortly after I became a minister, with the following note appended :—"The above are the simple facts without any variation. They might have been greatly extended, and many others told. But as they were originally written to be sent to Mr. Brown, Haddington,[1] I endeavoured to compress them. But they were never sent, and I think you the fittest to write them out correctly for the other members of the family, who

[1] Mr. Samuel Brown, her brother-in-law, founder of Itinerating Libraries.

are now able to appreciate their value."[1] By "writing out correctly" the facts she had put down, my mother meant putting them into shape as a memoir; which, as more used to composition than she, as a personal witness of nearly all the particulars she relates, and as having more perfect knowledge of the whole case than any other, after herself and my father, she judged me "the fittest" to undertake. But not having done so when the comparative freshness and fulness of my own recollections, and the accession of various particulars which my father's memory fondly cherished, and the opportunity of submitting all to her revision and to his, would have given to the production some worth and interest, I am persuaded that to attempt it now would justly be regarded as a vain labour, because a needless and unworthy substitute for my mother's own artless, graphic, and impressive version. Yet by so much as the omission to

[1] Rachel was the fourth child. At her decease there were but two younger living—the one an infant, to whom, as to all who were born afterwards, five in number, she was personally unknown.

execute her design, when that would have given satisfaction to her, and perhaps might have edified and comforted some of the members of the family who are gone, is matter to me of poignant regret, it only seems to render it the more incumbent that I should place the original materials in *their* possession, for whose benefit they were intended.

Nor is it by her surviving sons and daughters alone that these documents will be perused and preserved with peculiar and sacred interest, but by her grandchildren, some of whom intimately knew and greatly revered her, and cherish her memory with sentiments akin to those of their parents. And if by them such memorials deserve to be treasured, they are worthy of transmission to their posterity, as an heirloom rarer and more precious than any of a material nature. But, if it be proper to preserve and transmit them to descendants who did not know her, it seems only dutiful to her memory and to them to accompany the transmission with some notice of her life and character. "A good name is better than riches," and a character and example

marked by many of the highest moral attributes I account a more precious ancestral distinction, and of more purifying and elevating influence, than any connected with literary or scientific or political fame, in promoting one's temporal well-being and preparation for an eternal destiny.

In the subsequent pages it is but an outline, for the most part meagre, that is offered of her history, with a sketch of some of her leading characteristics. To this is subjoined a few extracts from letters to members of her family, and the sketch of her character by the Rev. Dr. Davidson in his sermon after her funeral. To those who best knew her, the inadequacy and imperfections of the memorial I have attempted will be most apparent. To strangers it might, on the contrary, appear in some parts an exaggerated representation. But for them, or for any beyond her domestic circle, it is not designed. It is not a publication; it is printed exclusively for the benefit of the members of her family and their descendants; and its main purpose is to present those attributes of her character which are entitled to their remembrance, admiration,

and imitation. But whatever error or defect may attach to the estimate or description of her by others, her own letters and her account of Rachel are true specimens, though only specimens, of her head, and heart, and character; and they constitute the jewels of which this little volume is but the casket.

H. R.

United Presbyterian Manse,
Kelso, *April* 1866.

Memorial.

THE subject of this notice was born in Edinburgh, February 16, 1781. Her father was Henry Duncan, merchant there, son of Peter Duncan, cloth manufacturer, and of his wife Christina Fernie. The elder of two surviving sons and a daughter, he carried on the cloth manufacture for several years, after his father's death; and I have been told was the last successful competitor for the premium given for broad cloth by the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Manufactures in Scotland. The great improvement in the West of England Cloths distanced all Scottish competition in the finer qualities; and abandoning this pursuit he confined his attention to a retail business, in a shop opposite St. Giles' Cathedral. He married, December 2, 1774, Rachel, second daughter of Robert Anderson, farmer of Cramilt, Peebles-shire, and of his wife Janet Grieve, a

daughter or descendant, I have heard, of Rachel Grieve of "Ramsay-cleugh," mentioned A.D. 1731 in the Memoirs of the Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick. She was noted for a fine face and elegant figure, but still more for talent, energy, and benevolence. It was customary in those days, among all grades of the mercantile community, for the wife to assist her husband in business; and in the present case she did so, and proved to him a valuable coadjutor. They resided in a house which he possessed, near the foot of Warriston's Close, and which was sold by his heirs only a few years ago, to make room for the extended premises of Messrs. W. & R. Chambers, whose north-eastern extremity is erected on its site. Standing back from the lofty and gloomy tenements which stretched downwards from the street, its light rooms and splendid view contrasted with the narrow and dingy close from which it entered. Then, fields overspread the area now covered by the New Town, no Mound divided the intervening valley, no North Bridge spanned its eastern extremity, no edifice was erected on the Calton Hill. In that home, airy and cheerful, within a hundred yards of their shop, the wedded pair began and spent their married life, and became the parents

of ten children, and enjoyed a large share of health, happiness, and prosperity. In religious principles Mr. Duncan was a Seceder, and a member of Bristo Street Congregation, then under the ministry of the Rev. John Patison. Mrs. Duncan was somewhat speculative in her views, associated much with the Quakers, whose practical benevolence she admired, and whose opposition to State imposts for religion she agreed with; and when Dr. James Macknight, afterwards celebrated for his Commentary on the Apostolical Epistles, became one of the ministers of the Old Church, his lectures attracted her by their learning, ability, and plainness, although they had neither the strain nor unction of Boston or of Patison. In politics she and her husband were of one mind, and belonged to the party known as the "Friends of the People." Nor were they less agreed on questions of morals and manners, being both greatly opposed to theatres, balls, and late parties; though so favourable to social intercourse, that one evening weekly was set apart for general company, when all friends of the family knew there was an open door and welcome. While averse to show, they disliked parsimony; and when one of the daughters, to save the expense of a new bonnet,

showed a disposition to wear on the old, though getting rather out of fashion, her mother threatened to "toss it out of the window." All the children were carefully reared in the principles of the Associate (or Burgher) Seceders; and among the memorable characteristics of that household were, conspicuous all the year round, diligence and punctuality in the observance of family worship morning and evening, in the religious instruction of children, apprentices, and servants, and in the sanctification of the Lord's day. Mrs. Duncan died December 16, 1800, predeceased by one son and one daughter. In my youth spontaneous and repeated mention of her was made to me by excellent and sagacious ladies and gentlemen who had known her, always in terms of admiration of her superior mind, intelligence, and character. After being some eighteen years a widower, and seeing all the members of his family settled in life and surrounded by families of their own, Mr. Duncan married a second time, a lady named Elizabeth Morris, who still survives. He had many years previously retired from business, and removed from Warriston's Close to Comely Gardens, a property he possessed in the suburbs, where he resided till his death, July 21, 1830, at the age of

82, enjoying till near his end a great measure of health, and devoting a good deal of his time to some of the charitable institutions of the city, and particularly to the Destitute Sick Society. Among his children, of whom a son and seven daughters survived him, there had been no breach for upwards of thirty years before his decease, and there was none for upwards of twenty years after it—a long period for so numerous a family advanced in life to remain unbroken.

Of this family Agnes was the fifth child and fourth daughter. By the testimony of her sisters and of others she most resembled her mother in person, mind, and character. With a bodily constitution remarkable for perfect organization, health, agility, and elasticity—with a mind ingenuous, quick, observant, vigorous, retentive, and ratiocinative—with a cheerful and well-ordered home—with a pious, upright, and benevolent example—well instructed in the principles and trained to the observances of the Gospel—nurtured also in the principles of political liberty, when suffering for them was rife—and privileged with an able and instructive minister, the Rev. James (afterwards Dr.) Peddie :—she possessed the elements, and enjoyed many advantages for the formation of a superior character.

In the period of adolescence, from childhood to maturity, the routine of home residence and of education was varied by occasional visits to Cramilt and to the family of the Rev. Mr. Hislop, seceding minister at the Kirk of Shotts, and by sojourn during a great part of each summer with other members of the family, at Stockbridge, where her paternal uncle possessed a property, which her father afterwards inherited, and disposed of to Heriot's Hospital, extending from the vicinity of the Bridge to what now forms Heriot Row.

From her fourteenth to her sixteenth year there appear to have been some interesting and marked developments in her spiritual history. It was at the fomer age that the truth which she had been taught from her childhood became to her more than a sacred doctrine to be received and revered, and that she was first sensible of light and gladness in depending for all her salvation simply upon what Christ had done and suffered for her as a divine substitute. It was in her sixteenth year, after serious and lively impressions of the truth, that she was received into the fellowship of the church. In connection with that step she mentioned that she went along with her sister Catherine, who was older than

she, and her superior, not more in age than in mind, intelligence, piety, and experience, to be examined by the Rev. Mr. Peddie, but who, on coming before him, was so agitated and confused as to seem doubtful and ignorant on points perfectly familiar to her; whereas she herself, though so inferior, feeling no perturbation, answered all his questions without difficulty or hesitation. And she instanced the case as a reason for caution and tenderness toward those who on examination are evidently labouring under fear, as the best qualified mentally and spiritually may thereby appear to great disadvantage. That sister not long after was removed by death, and being not only next elder to her, but her most intimate and beloved companion, who most influenced her, whom she looked up to as a guide and model, and who evinced a high degree of faith and resignation throughout the lingering illness which preceded her decease, December 15, 1797, the event made a deep and solemn impression, and, more than any other outward dispensation in her youth, appears to have been sanctified to her spiritual good. She realized vividly the vanity of the world and of all personal attractions, of which she thought her departed sister an embodiment, and formed that paramount estimate of things

spiritual and eternal, which might be discerned in all her after-life, and which held the material and temporal as ever of inferior moment. These impressions were revived and deepened by the decease, three years later, of her mother, whom of all human beings she held in the highest estimation. Before that event she had begun, probably from natural benevolence of disposition, stimulated by her mother's example, and fostered by the principles which the Gospel produced in her heart, those habits of ministering to the relief of the poor and the afflicted, for which in after-life she was conspicuous. A valued and venerated friend, Robert Waterston of Boston, North America, who emigrated from Edinburgh about that time, mentions in a letter to me since her decease, that the last time he saw her before going abroad was on accompanying his mother, an intimate friend of her mother, to visit a poor woman suffering from a sad malady, in whom the elder ladies were both much interested, and on entering there was she alone with the invalid assiduously fulfilling the part of a nurse.

Next to union with Christ, the event in her life of most importance in itself and of most influence in its results, was her marriage with William Renton, merchant, Edinburgh, which

took place July 7, 1802. When he paid his addresses to her he was in the employment of a firm of two elderly and unmarried partners, with what was then accounted a good salary, the principal charge, confidential relations, and a fair prospect of advancing income and ulterior succession. She had not discouraged his attentions, but, when he made proposals of marriage, she replied, "I will never marry another man's servant, you must be your own master before you can be my husband." The spirited and resolute response led him to re-consider his position and plan, and he was not long in deciding to embrace the first opportunity of commencing business on his own account. This he did in 1801 as a draper, at 9 North Bridge, where he continued till the tenement was taken down, some 25 years after, when he removed for a few years to a property of his own in St. Andrew's Square, afterwards purchased and occupied by the National Bank. Entering, as soon as circumstances justified the step, into the conjugal relation, he and his wife set out with principles and habits which well fitted them for the duties of their respective spheres, and promised, with health and God's blessing, the success happiness and usefulness, of which, through many years, they had severally a large share.

He was diligent in business, a pattern of integrity, punctuality, application, and perseverance, as regular and constant in attendance as if he had been a hired servant, and for many years rarely allowing himself relaxation or holiday. But he did not forget that he was a citizen, and that, as a man and a Christian, he must seek the well-being of the community, and the advancement of Christianity, as well as the interests of his family; and he was not backward to give his subscription or his time to the public cause or religious benevolence. Still less did he forget that he was a member of the church, and should seek her good. In the congregation to which he attached himself while a stripling, he continued a steadfast member till the close of his life. In the year of his marriage elected its Treasurer, he occupied that office upwards of forty years, and at the time of his death had been nearly forty-eight years an Elder, and fifty-three years a Manager; and he fulfilled the duties of these united offices, and promoted its interests, with a solicitude, diligence, and liberality, which proved him its most active and greatest benefactor. Integrity and uprightness, prudence and judgment, conjoined with a spirit of enterprise, marked him throughout the relations and transactions of life; and in the family

circle these were combined with great warmth and tenderness of affection. Nor only by his children, and his daughters-in-law, would the latter have been first named among the qualities which distinguished and endeared him. I remember Principal Lee, at a large private party, on proposing his health, describing him as "the very milk of human kindness." Of his career and character any sketch here is superseded by that furnished in the close of the sermon, preached on occasion of his death, by the Rev. Dr. John Brown of Broughton Place,[1] whose testimony, brief, but comprehensive, hearty, and emphatic, I value more than my patrimony, and trust will be cherished by his posterity, and blessed by God to form and foster in them all that was excellent and worthy of imitation in him.[2]

[1] Reprinted in Appendix.

[2] He was born at Edinburgh, January 7, 1774, and was the second of three surviving children—a daughter and two sons—of Peter Renton, damask manufacturer there. When he was but a few years old his father died, and he went to reside in Berwickshire with his grandfather, William Renton, farmer at Parkfoot, Channelkirk, and also an elder in that parish, who had in 1745 witnessed the battle of Prestonpans, being then resident with his father, also William Renton, who occupied, as his ancestors had done for generations, the farm of Birsley, near by.

In the domestic sphere she was no less fitted for the duties and responsibilities which devolved

Under the roof of that worthy grandsire, whose wife's name was Jean Swinton, he spent several years of his boyhood, enjoying there, and in a paternal aunt's, who was married to John Thomson of Boorhouse, in that vicinity, much kindness and happiness, which he ever referred to with affectionate remembrance. His mother was Christian Gordon, daughter of a damask manufacturer in Edinburgh, whose wife's name was Martin, from Dundee, and who was one of a family notable for longevity—his father having lived upwards of 110 years—himself upwards of 100 years—and his son John, my grand-uncle, and his successor in business, upwards of 93 years, retaining great vigour of faculties till the close—a godly man, as upright, decided, and independent, as any I ever knew. My grandmother, sister of the last, had no corresponding vigour of constitution, but was rather a delicate woman, pious, prudent, meek, tidy, and very comely, who survived her husband about 40 years, was an object of loving care to my father and mother, and died in their house, March 4, 1820, aged 76.

Having traced the genealogy of both parents up to the beginning of last century, and having had the testimony of the last two generations respecting those who immediately preceded them, I am led to the conclusion, that though, as a family, we have nothing to be proud of, neither have we any thing to be ashamed of, in the lines from which we are sprung, but much to be thankful for, in a succession of worthy well-doing sires and dames, who were all legitimate, honest, industrious, temperate, professedly

upon her in its important, varied, and increasing relations, and no less ready, from inclination as well as principle, to do good as she had opportunity beyond it. She became the mother of twelve children—eight sons and four daughters—of whom all, save one son and one daughter who died in childhood, reached maturity and settled positions in life. A charge so large and onerous claimed and engaged her assiduous occupation and constant care.

She was emphatically the soul and mistress of her household. The scene of my first recollections—a self-contained, two-storied house at Newington, with a garden attached, in which the family resided several years—recalls few associations with my father, who was away all day, and returned late to dinner, while the chil-

Christian, and some of them decidedly godly persons, and that in the whole pedigree no pair have been so worthy of honour, or such blessings to their family, to society, and to the church of Christ, as the last, whom may their children, and their children's children, to the latest generations, remember and emulate, in all that was godly and virtuous, in the example and testimony they have left behind them!

> "My boast is not that I deduce my birth
> From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth;
> But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
> The son of parents pass'd into the skies."

dren retired early to bed. But it is identified with her as the constant and presiding genius, on whom every thing depended, by whom every thing was directed, and in whom love and care activity and authority centered as parts of her being. Every thing was under her vigilant inspection in nursery, parlour, and kitchen. Every thing had to be done properly and thoroughly pertaining to person, dress, food, and furniture. There was no dusty corner nor confused drawer in her house—no soiled or untidy article of dress on her children—no neglect or disobedience of any of her orders by child or servant. Constant cheerfulness and great kindness were combined with constant firmness and great energy. Taste and order, cleanliness and comfort, vivacity and harmony, frugality and bountifulness, reigned in her household. Nor was spiritual instruction deferred till reading was acquired. Thoughts of God, unseen and all-seeing—of sin, and death, and hell—of Jesus, and pardon, and holiness, and heaven—of the sacredness of the Sabbath and of the Bible, were imparted with the earliest training to prayer, and graven with the first lines on memory.

When some of us were come of age for school, of which there was then none in that locality, my

father purchased a house in Buccleuch Place, to which we removed in the beginning of 1810, and which became emphatically the *home* of the family, as that in which eight children were born, and all were educated, and the two died that were taken away in childhood, and two were married; so that to the elder as to the younger, it is identified with the lively and happy periods of childhood and youth. The same characteristics which marked my mother's domestic rule when the family was small continued to distinguish it when the number was greatest; and her excellent management, which prevented all extravagance and waste, contributed to husband the substance which my father's industry acquired.

But although, during the increase and upbringing of her children, she had at all times much domestic duty in the efficient superintendence of a large household, she ever found opportunity for many works of humanity and benevolence and piety beyond the sphere of her family. In the circle of her relatives and intimate friends she was ever the first to be sent for in seasons of distress, and the readiest to go at the call or tidings of it, and the foremost to help, and the last to grow weary. Beyond that circle there were also, ever and anon, among the working

classes, and among the destitute, cases brought to her knowledge, or seeking her aid, to which, with no reluctance, or complaint, or talk of sacrifice, where her personal presence seemed needed, she would go forth in the rain or the night to minister alms, or counsel, or alleviation. Many and various, even then, when her hands were full at home, were the objects of her interest, and bounty, and efforts, to relieve from misery or rescue from sin. I have, when a boy, gone with her, and at her bidding, to places and persons I shrunk to approach, on these humane and benevolent errands.

Nor was she less interested in the public cause of religion. There were then few organizations for evangelical objects in comparison of what exist in the present day. The Bible Societies—"British and Foreign" and "Edinburgh," and the Missionary Societies—"London" and "Scottish," stood almost alone. But the anniversary meetings of these and some benevolent societies, the annual sermons for them, and occasional meetings and sermons, on visits of distinguished missionaries or preachers, were to her festivals of enjoyment. For the meetings, the Assembly Room was the place, the afternoon the time, and the company the religious *elite* of the city. Delightful is the

remembrance of these gatherings—the imposing throng of refined, intelligent, pious, people—the speakers sincere and eloquent, without claptrap, coarseness, or straining at effect—the sentiments and emotions elevating, stimulating, and purifying to the soul.

Reference has already been made to the death of two of her children. These bereavements were among the memorable, and most impressive, and, as I believe, most sanctified events in the earlier portion and experience of her married life. The first was that of her third son and sixth child, William, the most robust and precocious of all the boys of the family, who was cut off after a short illness, by hooping-cough and measles, September 6, 1813, aged one year and ten months—a solemn visitation, as their first parental bereavement, to her, and not less to my father, who then "purchased a possession of a burying place," "wherein never man before was laid," in what was then a new addition to the original and only, but now old, Calton Burying Ground. Into that sepulchre, first occupied by this young tenant, have been gathered, in the succeeding fifty years, nearest kindred of four generations—sister, brother, grandmother, father, mother, and younger ones, than was he, of brother's and sister's children—who

> "All sleep in Death's dark gloom,
> Until th' eternal morning wake
> The slumbers of the tomb."

The second was that of Rachel—the subject of the notice appended to this sketch—her second daughter and fourth child, who after a long illness, the close of which was marked by intense sufferings and illumined by triumphant faith, departed February 16, 1815, aged only six years and nine months. I have reason to think that no trial in my father's life affected him so deeply as this, and that none was more blessed to him, taking place, as it did, when his business was greatest and most prosperous, and he perhaps most liable to be unduly engrossed with temporal things. How it affected my mother, her "Account of Rachel" shews, and after-references will attest. Of all the relatives and friends she lost, Rachel's was the most treasured memory. That child, before becoming the prey of disease, was above all the rest, save William who predeceased her, remarkable for health, and growth, and vigour, and not less for openness, vivacity, and fun. None knew her more intimately in health and in trouble than I. I witnessed also her closing scenes:—her extreme sufferings—her horror at the first realisation that

she was dying—her intense desires for life—her victory in that conflict—her calm resignation—her solemn fortitude—her vivid sense of her body's dissolution and of her spirit's summons into the glorious presence of her God and Saviour—her firm faith—her bright hope—her freedom from all fear of death—her longing to depart—her looks and exclamations on seeing visions of angels. I have seen many death-beds since—some of young, some of adult, some of aged, some of eminent Christians. But, of all I have ever witnessed, none stands out to my view so touching, so solemn, so impressive, so heavenly, as hers. I have ever felt it difficult to think of her as a mere child, so strong is the impression of a maturity of thought, and manner, and character, befitting the wisdom and experience of an adult rather than the mind and deportment of a little girl. Blessed sister! of all my familiars in this earthly pilgrimage, the one whose life has the faintest association with sin, and whose death the brightest with glory.

After her eldest daughter's course of education was completed, who was qualified and willing to relieve her of a considerable share of domestic management, it seemed to her that, without neglect of her family, she might do more

for her generation, and her benevolent activities soon found fullest occupation. Not that the concerns of her household were neglected, far less renounced. Its interests were ever present to her mind and heart, and its direction she held, without transfer or surrender, to the last day of her conscious existence, forty years after. Whatever her occupations and engagements in other spheres, she was ever ready to quit them all, and to devote her undivided attention to any member of her family, whom affliction had befallen, or whose case appeared to her to furnish the paramount claim and call of duty. For the sake of one, when her interests and energies were most engrossed with benevolent operations, she was willing to have withdrawn wholly not only from them, but from society, and to have consecrated all her time and care and effort, could she thereby have rendered the benefit she desired. Details, which delicacy restrains me from mentioning, even to members of her own family, and still more to those of a second generation, who had no knowledge of the circumstances, throw strong light upon this feature of her character, and warrant me to say that she was a mother, who, had occasion required, would have perilled and parted with anything personal—property, com-

fort, health, life—everything but truth and duty —to save any of her children temporally or spiritually. She would sooner have become a beggar than that any of them should have become a bankrupt, and would sooner have lived on bread and water, or toiled as a slave, than that any of them should have become a drunkard. It was not, therefore, at the expense of the domestic affections, or of the moral or spiritual interests of her family, that she gave much time and labour to seek the good of others. So long as her daughters remained at home to take her place, and to fulfil her plans and wishes, little inconvenience was felt from the expenditure of her energies in other spheres. But, when by marriage they were all withdrawn, the loss was felt and apparent; for her multiplied engagements, and the habits they had induced, left her neither the leisure nor the disposition to bestow upon her household affairs the measure of attention she had given to them in earlier years, and many details and arrangements, in which her care and taste used to be conspicuous, she treated latterly as of little moment. For a time, indeed, after she had been deprived of their help, she laid down the plan of eight hours a-day for sleep and dress, eight hours for domestic duties, and eight hours

for benevolent and public occupations beyond her family. But the last was often found to encroach largely on the second, and these extraneous and public occupations formed in truth the great business of the latter half of her life.

During the long period of more than thirty years these avocations were so numerous and so various, and I believe often so remarkable and so useful, that an account of them would doubtless have been highly interesting to her descendants. Had she left Diaries, that might have been supplied; or had she written an Autobiography, it would have been unique, and much valued by others besides those of her own house. Unfortunately, these are both wanting. Nor can their absence be supplied by the next best substitute—an ample and continuous collection of her Letters. She wrote a great many in her time, most of them of a business kind, in connection with cases and causes of benevolence, to all sorts of persons, which were as words spoken, answering their purpose for the moment, and gone beyond recall. But she wrote a great many to members of her own family, ordinarily hurriedly, yet each throwing so much light upon her own state of occupation or mind for the time being, and having so

much character, that a connected series would have furnished a graphic picture of her course. Her letters to myself were so many, and for a long period so frequent, that, like a weekly periodical, which, however welcomed and relished, is when read thrown aside, they were not preserved, unless in a very few cases by design, and in some by accident. As it was with myself so it has been with other members of the family, beyond which I have made no inquiries; so that only a few dozens of letters altogether have come into my hands, from which a selection of extracts is appended.

In the absence of materials for any Narrative of what may be called her extra-domestic, if not public, labours, I shall attempt at the close of this sketch some delineation of her Leading Characteristics, and in illustration of these shall introduce such information and incidents as I am possessed of, relating to her extended occupations, along with, it may be, some particulars pertaining rather to her private and strictly personal history.

In her domestic sphere during that long and busy period there were of course many changes, including events of great moment and interest to a parent, as well as to her children, in the successive decisions and settlements which

influenced or determined their positions and prospects for life. To go into particulars would be to relate in some measure the history of the living members of her family, which were entirely foreign to the design of this Memorial. Suffice it to say that she saw her surviving sons and daughters, ten in number, spared without any breach for more than twenty-six years, and all of them settled in life, her three daughters and four of her sons married, and seven families of grandchildren, several of them numerous, and some of them with branches of great-grandchildren, added to her progeny. In all that related to them her interest was ever lively and ever practical, and seemed to grow in alertness and strength with the multiplication of its objects. She was ever ready to rejoice heartily in their joys, to sorrow tenderly in their griefs, and to share bravely their cares and burdens.

But, although silence is becoming in what pertains to the living, mention must not be omitted of the dead. Repeatedly did she experience bereavement's heavy sorrows. In no case since the decease of Rachel were these more felt than in that of her youngest daughter, Christina Gordon, wife of Mr. Duncan M'Laren—most fair and beautiful, most artless, affectionate,

and disinterested, in moral and religious principles inflexible, and in her long and severe illness most patient and resigned—which took place November 1, 1841, aged 28.[1] The next was that of her eldest son Peter, who was cut off suddenly by heart disease, November 1, 1843, aged 40. And the last known to her, which preceded her own only a few weeks, was that of her seventh son, Alexander, October 25, 1863. Besides these, and the loss of several infant grandchildren, she had for twenty years a burden heavier than a bereavement, in oft-recurring solicitude and heaviness regarding Thomas Laidlaw, her sixth son, who had emigrated to the United States of America in 1839; and after some years' residence in the North, where his commercial speculations were unsuccessful, went South in the spring of 1843; and after his last call on the British Consul at New Orleans, who was a personal friend, was never again heard of, notwithstanding earnest inquiries and repeated advertisement at intervals of years,

1 "And oft as fancy paints thy bier,
And, mournful, eyes thy lowly bed,
The secret sigh shall rise, the tear
That shuns observance shall be shed."
Lines on her Tombstone.

throughout the United States. While, however, like others, she found life a chequered scene, and was called to sing of mercy and of judgment, she had on the whole a very large share of domestic blessings; she enjoyed great happiness in them, and in the review of them, and of the prosperity of her family, she accounted her sorrows and trials few and light in comparison of her joys and mercies, and oft exclaimed, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Yet, among the bright and memorable events in the family history one claims special notice. On the completion of the fiftieth year of her married life an interesting celebration of it took place, at which all the members of her family in this country were present, including four sons, two daughters, three sons-in-law, two daughters-in-law, one who had acted and was esteemed as a daughter-in-law, and twenty-three grandchildren, along with a few other special friends. It happened that at the time one son was Moderator of the United Presbyterian Synod, and one son-in-law Lord Provost of Edinbugh. About noon on the Jubilee Anniversary, Wednesday, July 7, 1852, the different branches of the family met in their common home, the house of our venerable parents,

22 Buccleuch Place. On entering, all, old and young, received wedding favours and gloves, according to old Scotch fashion. The seniors were ushered into the drawing-room, where father and mother awaited them; and when they were all assembled and had taken their places—the aged couple in arm chairs about the middle of the room—the youngsters entered in procession, two and two, according to age, and, ranged in a beautiful group in front of their grandparents, presented, by the hands of John Robson, as eldest grandson, though not eldest grandchild, the gift of the united grandchildren. It consisted of a magnificent quarto Bible, richly bound and clasped. In the interior of the board fronting the title-page a silver shield is inserted, of ten inches by six, within which is an oval tablet, six inches by four and a-half, containing an embossed genealogical tree of gold. On the base of the trunk are engraved the names of the grandparents, with a plaited lock of the hair incased beneath each. On the successive branches are the names of their children, and where married those also of their partners, with a number of twigs attached, corresponding to that of the grandchildren, and affixed to each a lock of the child's hair with a number indicating the name

on the margin of the shield. Surrounding the tablet is a space of about an inch, between the gold rim inclosing it and the border of the shield, which is occupied at the top and bottom with the inscription,[1] and on either side with the names of the donors, in the order of their families, to the number of thirty-one. In making the presentation the speaker delivered a pretty and appropriate address, expressive of the love and reverence and good wishes of the donors, and of their desire to follow the example which had been set by their grandparents, and to gladden their hearts by walking in the fear of the Lord. "Grandpapa" replied with not a little emotion, giving vent to

[1] *PRESENTED*

TO

GRANDPAPA AND GRANDMAMMA RENTON,

ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR MARRIAGE,

WITH AFFECTIONATE CONGRATULATION,

BY

(The names follow on either side of the tablet which is here inserted.)

EDINBURGH, 7TH JULY 1852.

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting
To everlasting upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children."

Psalm ciii. 17.

his feelings of gratitude, interest, and affection. We then engaged in worship. After praise and reading some portions of Scripture I gave a brief address, chiefly retrospective of the example and influence of the parents that day honoured, and Dr. Robson concluded the service with prayer. An interchange of gifts followed from some of the elder members to their parents, and from the latter to all. Each of the children received from their grandpapa a purse and half-sovereign, and their parents souvenirs of rings or brooches; while grandmamma gave to each, old and young, a paragraph pocket Bible. Dinner followed with toasts and songs, which were excessively enjoyed by the youngsters. The festivities were continued on the two succeeding days—the party on the Thursday evening comprising, with that of the preceding day, those relatives who had been present at the marriage fifty years before, and their descendants—and that on Friday evening a number of other friends not less numerous. The whole were concluded with worship, the parting hymn on Friday evening being the second Paraphrase. The days were long, the weather was fine, all were in health, all were happy, and the venerable pair, whom all had met to honour, were not only hale, but fresh, and vigorous, and,

in the words of one of the juniors, "all parted greatly gratified and delighted with the auspicious celebration of grandpapa's and grandmamma's Golden Wedding."

At that time a full-length portrait of her—the best, and, indeed, only good one ever taken—was painted by Macnee for her son William, and conveys a correct idea of her figure and looks in her then 72nd year. A companion to it, by the same artist, was at the same time executed of her husband, then in his 79th year. Both portraits bespeak the enjoyment of health, and suggest a period of life ten years younger.

With no perceptible symptom of decay in her, and no other than slower motion and diminished activity in him, their union continued for two years and a-half longer. And, after a duration of fifty-two years and eight months, it was broken, with little more than an hour's warning, by his sudden decease of heart disease, February 9th, 1855, in his 82nd year, deeply lamented by all his family, who, though of mature years, realized, from the youngest to the oldest, that in the death of a loving, good, and wise father, each had lost the strongest and truest earthly stay.

Sustained and cheered under the trial by every motive of Christian resignation, and hope,

and comfort, she seemed to feel only a fresh stimulus to be instant in doing good during the brief uncertain term of opportunity which might remain to her.

For nearly four years she continued to enjoy good health, with some slight interruptions, and an occasional sensation of giddiness, which excited anxiety. Her philanthropic interests and labours were undiminished, only she felt increasingly the need of using conveyances for even moderate distances. Her mental powers were unabated. But a sudden change took place on the morning of December 18, 1858. On the preceding day, she had been remarkably well and active; in the evening, after supper, had remained much longer than ordinarily with her son; and was in unusual spirits when she left him, between 11 and 12 o'clock. Next morning, a domestic, who slept in the room adjoining hers, on getting up early, heard moans, and entering found her on the floor prostrate, speechless, and cold. It was a severe attack of paralysis on the right side. Several days elapsed before her speech became articulate. Gradually, however, it was restored; and, when sufficiently recovered to converse, she gave me a circumstantial account of the whole circumstances, and

of her sensations—evincing the most perfect consciousness and acute observation throughout the time she had been speechless. Her recovery slowly progressed. In May 1859, she was removed for a week or two to Newington House, and derived sensible benefit from the visit. A few weeks after she proceeded to Kelso, and spent upwards of a month there with still further improvement. After a short stay at home, she went to Trinity for another month, and experienced additional advantage. So that in the autumn she seemed wonderfully rallied, and again received visitors, and enjoyed occasional evening parties. Not the slightest trace of paralysis was left in her speech, or look, or manner. It was otherwise with her gait, for she was never afterwards able to walk without assistance, nor beyond a few steps at a time. And although she recovered the use of her right hand sufficiently to sign her name, it was only at rare times that she attempted, or was able, to write a letter. And with writing she gave up reading, always employing another. As all her senses and faculties continued acute, active, and vigorous, the task of reading to her, and writing for her, was one of no small labour. Her disablement for personal labours increased

her correspondence, and she dictated her letters with as great promptitude as clearness and decision. As far as practicable, she carried on her old operations by proxy, and her interest continued unabated in all the objects and schemes which had formerly engaged it. Nor did she lose ground throughout the winter and spring, although she did not venture out of doors. On the Friday before the Communion in April, she surprised her household by giving some orders about her dress; and still more, on the Saturday, by sending a message to the cab-hirer, that, as a matter of necessity, she must have a conveyance next afternoon, to attend the Communion service. Remonstrance against the hazard of such an exertion was vain; her mind was made up; and when the hour arrived she set out, attended by a granddaughter and servant, and for the last time enjoyed that ordinance, under the ministrations of her pastor, Dr Davidson, and her son-in-law, Dr Robson. No one was more confounded than her medical attendant, Dr John Brown, who heard with incredulity of what she had done, and made an early visit on the Monday morning, but no injury had resulted. Her improvement continued; and at the Synod meeting in May 1860, the house was crammed

with visitors, by her own invitation, and she had large parties daily, whose presence she enjoyed, although she rarely took her place at table. And in all that related to the Tricentenary of the Reformation no one took a livelier interest.

A great change, however, took place in June. She became liable to violent palpitations and severe paroxysms, which not only subjected her to great sufferings, but excited frequent apprehensions of her approaching death. These continued in a greater or less degree, with occasional intervals of alleviation, through the remaining three years and a-half of her life—a long period of, often, great tribulation. Under this trial, especially after the second year, her nervous system was greatly affected. She who before was so strong of nerve, as to be capable of bearing almost any recital, and of encountering almost any spectacle, could not now listen to any tidings of violence, or suffering, or death. She forbade the mention of war, or crimes, or accidents, or of the decease, or dangerous illness, of any of her friends, however dear or intimate. And if, by incaution, an announcement or reference was made, which surprised her with intelligence of this sort, the effect was instant and distressing: she gave a look of agony—her face

flushed—she gasped—the perspiration burst out upon her, and, though medical remedies were instantly applied, the shock was not recovered for perhaps hours. This change was strikingly exemplified by her opposite habits at the two periods of the Italian and the American wars. At the former, every morning before breakfast, on the arrival of the newspaper, her first direction was to read the latest telegrams regarding Garibaldi. That done, and breakfast over, the next thing was to hear all the details in other columns about the Italian cause. At the period of the American war, on the other hand, the subject was one of horror to her, not to be named, and she remained ignorant of all the details. Yet she had no disinclination to hear or talk of death—apart from that of her friends, and still less to think and converse about her own.

From the time she became subject to palpitations, she felt as though she never could get enough of air; and the dining-room was converted into her bed-room; yet, notwithstanding its size, she had often both door and one or more windows open. This removal down stairs also facilitated her getting out in an invalid chair, if but for a few minutes, as often as her

inclination and the state of the weather permitted; and she much enjoyed, and seemed always to derive advantage from exercise in the open air, to which she had been habituated all her life.

But her sufferings were often great and continuous—for weeks and months, sometimes, requiring a couple of attendants by day and by night; and it was only astonishing that she rallied as she did, and had so many intervals of alleviation and improvement. It was still more remarkable that her mental powers continued in undimmed clearness and undiminished vigour. That signal mercy, in conjunction with a heart at peace with God, and an elastic constitution, that had never been disordered by intemperance, nor relaxed by indolence, enabled her to sustain shocks and endure sufferings, under which others would quickly have sunk; although these very elements of strength—mental, moral, and physical—probably subjected her, under the assaults of disease, to fiercer conflicts than others could have borne, or, therefore, experienced. What outward aids her case admitted of she no doubt had, in the best medical skill rendered with all the sympathy of friendship, in the unremitting attentions of faithful and devoted domestics, in

the willing services of loving friends, in the affectionate ministrations of her daughters and of granddaughters, and in the ceaseless considerateness, care, and kindness of her son who lived with her.

As her strength declined, and her affliction became more distressing, she saw fewer callers, and even intimate friends were seldom admitted to her room. In the intervals of relief, her hours were passed in hearing something read, or making inquiries, or getting information, or giving directions, about some of the objects in which she was interested, or occasionally, but with diminishing frequency, dictating letters. It may best illustrate the way in which a portion of her time was occupied, and in which some of her operations were carried on throughout the term of her personal disablement and even prostration, as well as the relations in which her domestics stood to her, to relate a few of the simple but graphic anecdotes of one who had been long under her roof and much employed on errands of mercy :—

" An old lady, whom Mrs. Renton much befriended, said to me on calling one stormy day—'I have been thinking of you in this weather, and wondering how you can go about.' 'Oh,

mem, I may say as Jacob, when he served fourteen years for Rachel, that they seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to her, and I have that love for Mrs. Renton that it makes service light to me.'

"Mrs. Renton said to me one day, about two years before her death, when sending me out on some of her errands—'It is a strange thing that the Lord continues me here, who am now a useless member.' I thought upon her words as I went along to the different houses I was to call at; and at every one of them the poor people were so full of blessings upon her, and so grateful and earnest for her life, that I thought, It is just in answer to the prayers of the poor people Mrs. Renton is preserved. And on returning, I said—'Weel, mem, I can tell you what way the Lord is keeping you here.' 'What way is it?' 'I think just in answer to the prayers of the poor people and your friends—you have so many that are praying for you.' Mrs. Robson entered the room, and her mother said—'Do you hear what Doig says?' Mrs. Robson replied—'It looks very like it.'

"I never knew any one like her for levelling the mountains and smoothing the rough places. No difficulties frightened her, and when others

would have been baffled she found some other way, which none but herself would have tried or thought of. And she had such an influence wi' people.

"Once she sent me to the matron of the Poorhouse. The porter there directed me to her door. I rang the matron's bell. After waiting a while, I rang again. She appeared all dressed, and seeing it was only a plain body like me that was at the door, said—'Was it you that rang in that style?' I said, 'Yes, mem.' She was in a great passion at my presumption, and at her being hurried to come to the door. When she got out her breath, I said—'Mrs. Renton sent me with a message.' Whenever she heard Mrs. Renton's name she changed, and was all respect to me, *memming* me at every sentence. Another time I was sent by her to the House of Refuge with a girl who had been there several times before. On seeing the governor, and mentioning the young woman's name, he stormed, and said she could not be admitted—it was of no use—she had been often there, and was no better, and so on. I said—'All he said I had no doubt was true; I had nothing to do with the girl, and couldna defend her; but Mrs. Renton had sent me wi' her.' The moment he heard wha

had sent her, he came off his high horse, and was so polite and kind, and said, 'Oh! surely,' and directed her where to go. On coming back I told Mrs. Renton, and said—'I think, mem, if I were to go to the bank and use your name they would give me money, for it is just like a spell upon folks.' She smiled, and said—'You had better not try it, or you'll get so many months' lock-up.'

"Sometime after she was gone, I minded about a poor boy she was interested in, and I went to Mr M—— to see what could be done to get him into the Orphan Hospital. He was very kind, and gave me a paper, and told me I must get as many influential signatures as I could. I went about, and got a good many, and on passing Professor R——'s door I thought I wad ask his too. He refused, saying he never put his name to a case he did not personally know. I said—'The boy is without father or mother or friend on earth; I'm no connection of his, but Mrs. Renton on her death-bed said—'I wish to get that boy into the Orphan Hospital.'' And with that he turned about in a moment and put his name to the paper, and at the next meeting of the managers the boy was admitted."

Through the members of her family who

happened to be beside her, and through others, as well as her domestics, her interest was kept up in the objects which had been wont to engage it, and her usefulness to society continued to the close of her existence—"doing good, as she had opportunity, unto all, especially unto them that are of the household of faith."

Amid the fluctuations but progressive declension of her condition she had in her domestic relations frequent occasions of satisfaction and joy. On the last year of her life a pretty and singular instance may be noticed, evincing the love and respect of her granddaughters. Three of them were that year married—one at Newington House, Edinburgh, in January—another at Kelso, in July—and a third at Queen's Crescent, Glasgow, in November; and each, at the conclusion of the ceremony, on quitting the parental roof, proceeded directly to her grandmamma's, to present herself and her husband in their new relation, and to receive her congratulation and blessing, before setting out on the marriage tour.

But, as her days advanced, she experienced that "if by reason of strength they be four-score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow;" and under the decay of the earthly tabernacle "she groaned, being burdened." Her last

weeks were marked by severe suffering and extreme weakness, under which the bodily powers gradually sunk; while the senses and mental faculties continued unimpaired, and, when exempted from pain and restlessness, she was quiet and happy.

In the course of October she had sensibly declined, and at the close of it, after her son Alexander's death, there was a marked change in her aspect and spirit. She seemed feeble, and broken, and shrunk. Her vivacity was gone, never to return. She was less disposed to speak. The evil days succeeded, without intermission, of oppression and suffering from disease and decay, in which the patient says, "I have no pleasure in them." Swelling appeared in her extremities, her back suffered from constant confinement to bed, her breathing became laborious. Repeatedly it seemed that her dissolution was drawing nigh, and all the members of her family within a few hours' reach were summoned to her bedside. On asking her, a fortnight before her death, how she felt, she replied, "In the agonies of death." On another occasion to a similar question, and with a look more expressive than her words, she rejoined, "In great distress—pray for me." I did so,

under an apprehension that her spirit was disquieted and fainting, but, on concluding, she said, "It is not my soul that gives me any concern. I have committed it to Christ. It is my body—my suffering, dying body—that is all my burden." The last time I saw her in life, Monday, December 14, she never attempted to speak, and when I took her hand in mine, it lay passive. On the forenoon of the succeeding Wednesday, her intercourse with the outward world ceased. She then last closed her eyes, and thenceforth, without any sign of recognition, or any nutriment, (for she had given strict charge that if she became incapable of tasting food, there was to be no attempt to force stimulants into her mouth.) or any motion, she lay peacefully till the morning of Friday the 18th, when her breathing became fainter, and at 3.40, in the presence of her two daughters, her son, and her attendants, "she closed her mouth firmly, and was at rest, with a lovely smile upon her countenance." That supernatural beauty, not infrequent after death, so irradiated her—every feature so sharp and instinct with intelligence, and all so benignant, so intellectual, so spiritual, and yet so solemn,—that the dawn of the resurrection seemed begun, and the transition not only

certain, but natural, and easy, to incorruption, immortality, and glory. Her age was 82 years and 10 months. Her remains were accompanied to the grave on Wednesday the 23d, by eighteen members of her own family, including those of the second generation, her brother, and a select company of friends. "After she had served her own generation by the will of God, she fell on sleep, and was laid unto her fathers, and saw corruption."

On the Lord's Day after her funeral, unusual respect to the memory of a private, and still more of a female, member, on such an occasion, was shewn to her's, in the Congregation from which she had been removed, by the Elders all appearing in full mourning, and, although it was the day of Communion, by the Minister's devoting the close of his discourse to a special notice and improvement of her decease. Few in her station have been so much, and by so many, loved and esteemed in life, and have left a memory so respected and honoured. It has been said, that no man is a hero before his valet. And certainly nothing more effectually tests respect and admiration for an individual than intimate knowledge and close observation of his sentiments, dispositions, habits, and behaviour,

when withdrawn from the notice and influence of society, when left free to act out his true character, and when still further subjected to prolonged confinement and suffering. To all these tests she was subjected. It was her lot to need for years the constant assistance of two attendants, and it was her privilege to have always in those so employed—the extra as well as the stated—persons actuated both by Christian principle and by grateful devotedness to herself. Their duties were often trying. They witnessed all that was weak and humiliating in her condition. They were wholly subject to her authority. But, of all who knew her, I doubt if any survivors cherish her memory with deeper veneration, admiration, and affection, than these pious and faithful servants. *The memory of the just is blessed.*

HER SPECIAL FRIENDS.

She had a large circle of friends among various classes, and a very large circle of acquaintances, male and female, comprising not a few eminent in the religious world and in philanthropic labours; and the estimation in which she was held by those of them who survive, many scores of notes and letters, received since her death by my brother and by other members of her family, attest. But while there were many excellent and estimable persons with whom, in her long and active course, she was brought into close contact, and united in sincere and warm friendship, there were a few who occupied pre-eminently the relation of very intimate and confidential friends, and in the retrospect of the last fifty years Three stand out to my view above all others as successively occupying that relation.

The first was Mrs. Jane Sinclair, whose maiden name was Young, and whose husband

was a merchant in Edinburgh, and an early and intimate friend of my father. Between her and my mother, from the time of our family's removal to Buccleuch Place in 1810 till her death, Jan. 27, 1819, at the age of 35, the closest friendship subsisted. Her graceful figure, and sincere, gentle, kind manner are associated, in my remembrance, with the disinterested, benevolent, modest, thoughtful, godly character which distinguished her, nor can I recall any bereavement out of our family which my mother so much lamented. Her elder daughter, in a note to my brother since my mother's death, says, "Mrs. Renton was very dear to us from early reminiscences, being the most intimate and beloved friend of our mother. Her kindness and attention to us when children, after our mother's death, we can never forget, and in maturer years, when able to appreciate her fine intellect, quickness of perception, and kindness of heart, we regarded her with the greatest affection and respect. Her labours of love as a Christian gentlewoman are well known. Of her it may truly be said, 'when the ear heard her, then it blessed her; when the eye saw her, it gave witness to her; and the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon her.'"

After Mrs. Sinclair's decease the friend with whom she became most intimate, whom she most visited, and with whom she had the largest and longest correspondence, was Mrs. Elizabeth Stenhouse of Glasgow, who after a few years' marriage had been left a widow with an only son, but had been an attached friend many years before while yet Miss E. Currie. To a very prepossessing appearance and engaging manner this lady united superior intelligence, judgment, and taste, with such genuine piety, sterling principle, disinterested and active benevolence, lively sympathy, cheerful equanimity, and warmth and constancy of affection, as won the admiration and regard of all who knew her, and unspeakably endeared her to intimate friends. Of no one am I better entitled to bear loving and grateful witness. For a number of years she was, even more than my mother's, my own most intimate friend, and that relation only strengthened their's. Her house, till I had one of my own, was, next to my father's, more than ever any other, my home. There I spent a great portion of some of the most critical years of my life; there after a season of disquiet and peril I had soothing and guidance and revival, which no one less loving and wise, or less loved or confided in, could

have imparted; and to her, after my parents, to whom I could not so freely open all my heart, I owe more than to any other human being. She and my mother had many elements of character in common — ready sympathy with distress, promptitude of effort for its alleviation, unwearied benevolence, pure disinterestedness, firm fidelity, and entire unity of Christian faith and hope. Warm was their love and admiration of each other, and their friendship, till interrupted by death, continued, without flaw or decay, a source of much mutual happiness and of much benefit to others. Trials and troubles that could not have been anticipated befel the latter years of this beloved friend, and proved how sterling were the graces and virtues that had shone with lustre in her days of health and prosperity. She died in the Lord at Nice, (February 19, 1860, aged 75,) where she had resided from October 1858, solaced in her closing days, as through her widowed life, by the society of her son, whose infirm health had rendered him her constant companion and chief care, as it had also through long years drawn closer their mutual sympathy and fellowship, although it had deprived society of the benefit which his force of character, his scientific attainments, and his religious decision

would have imparted wherever their influence extended.

The third and last of these chief friends is Mrs. Catherine Macnab of Glasgow, whose maiden name was Knox. Of this lady, who happily survives, I may not speak so freely as of those departed, and shall only say, that, inferior to neither of them in talent, intelligence, piety, or disinterested zeal for the good of others, she has been a long, valued, and successful labourer in an unobtrusive yet wide and interesting sphere—partly by her pen, both in private correspondence and published biography—but principally as the introducer into this country, first at Greenock in 1830, and afterwards at Glasgow, of the "Mothers' Meetings," now so extensively formed, and as the mainspring in the latter city of probably the largest and most influential of these to be found in the United Kingdom,—and in that department of Christian usefulness, and in other less conspicuous though not less assiduous labours, has proved one of the most honoured spiritual benefactresses of her generation. Unlike each of the earlier friends, who were near my mother's age, and had known her from the beginning of her married life, she was very much younger, and did not meet with her till nearly

three-score of her years had run. But before meeting they were mutually acquainted with each other's character and labours, and mutually held each other in high esteem. Their first interview, rapidly succeeded by others, led to a warm and close friendship, which through my mother's after-years continued a source of much enjoyment in health, and during her long period of affliction was as a precious elixir, which oft revived and refreshed her more than any other human influence. Many and prolonged were the visits to aid and please her undertaken by this friend, sometimes with much self-denial and risk, while herself a sufferer from severe neuralgic affections. Such is Christian friendship, dearest and strongest in affliction and in the valley of the shadow of death. It is the privilege of children to be the parent's heirs, and in this case the friendship which she could no longer enjoy has been transferred to members of her family, by whom it is cherished with the highest gratitude and appreciation, and with the fervent desire that they may long enjoy its beneficial influence.

HER LEADING CHARACTERISTICS.

It were impossible to write any sketch, however brief and imperfect, of my mother's life, without at least incidentally bringing into view her leading characteristics. But they were such as claim a more full and formal notice. Few women possessed such independence as she, or such public spirit, or such benevolence, or such energy, or such faith. Each of these she had in an eminent degree, and each was augmented by combination with the others. Her benevolence was the most prominent; but without her independence, or her activity, or her faith, it would not have been what it was—so energetic, so wide in its range, so ceaseless. And so it may be said of each of the others. They were severally stimulated, invigorated, elevated, and purified by the influence of the rest, which, though distinct, were not antagonistic, but congenial qualities, ever ready to act in concert and

mutual support. Of each of these, in the order in which they have been already named, some delineation and illustration will now be offered.

Her Independence.

She had been accustomed from her childhood to think for herself. This habit, encouraged by her domestic education, and especially by the counsel and example of her mother, she carried into all things, domestic and public, political and religious. Sometimes she might lack sufficient data for the conclusion at which she arrived, and thereby be misled or mistaken. But on matters where she knew her information to be correct and ample, her decisions were usually as sound as they were firm and irrevocable. She rapidly formed her opinion, fearlessly avowed it, and unhesitatingly acted upon it. She cared little for conventionalities, and nothing at all for names or numbers, in opposition to what she believed to be true or right. She looked at things on their own merits and claims, and would have been as ready to support a good project brought forward by a beggar, as if it had been propounded by a prince, or rather more ready in the former case than in the latter, for she would have said,

"The beggar's position demands for him all the countenance I can give him; the prince's will secure for him plenty of parasites and flatterers to sound his praise, and win attention for his project, even were it less worthy than it is." Two striking illustrations of her independence and firmness recur to me.

When a little boy I was taken by her one day to Musselburgh, on a visit to her esteemed friends the Rev. Alexander and Mrs. Black. On returning in the evening in the stage coach, there was lifted into it, at Portobello, without leave given or asked of the other passengers, a woman wrapped in a blanket, and, from the portion of her face visible, evidently covered with some eruption. It was a case of small pox; and in ignorance and recklessness of the wrong and peril, as well as the offence, to others, the convenient opportunity was seized of conveying the patient, as far as the coach went, to the Edinburgh Infirmary. My mother kept open the window nearest her, and put me close to it. The journey was then by the Canongate and Nether Bow to the coach office opposite the Tron Church. From that destination I was marched homewards; but on reaching George's Square, to my surprise and disappointment, being fatigued

and sleepy, I was trotted round it, and into one of the Meadow walks, before being taken into the house, and then, to my greater surprise and annoyance, stripped and bathed from head to foot before being put to bed. No evil consequence happened to me. But, some days after, my eldest sister, who stood next to me in the family, became unwell, and by-and-by an eruption appeared, which my mother pronounced small pox. The family doctor was called in, who was puzzled, and could say nothing decisively about the disease, except that it was *not* small pox, as the child had been successfully vaccinated. He brought next day two other doctors, who agreed with him that it was not and could not be small pox, while my mother insisted that it was, and had no doubt the infection had been conveyed from the woman in the stage coach. A consultation of the faculty was agreed upon, and a large number of leading practitioners met in the house, and confirmed the opinion of the family doctor, that the disease was not small pox, though somewhat resembling it. On my mother intimating her entire dissent from their opinion, the senior physician spoke of the impropriety of an unprofessional person setting up an opinion against the faculty. She replied—"If the

faculty told me black was white, am I to disregard the evidence of my senses? I have seen small pox in its different stages, I have watched the disease, I have found this case to be exactly like others, except, happily, in a milder form, and nothing you have asserted alters my opinion." So they departed, amazed and displeased at her audacity, and she at their unreasonable obstinacy. Dr. James Gregory, then at the head of the profession, but in no favour with many of his Edinburgh brethren, on account of his independence, and unsparing exposure on some occasions of their defects and delinquencies, was then called in. On seeing the child, and being asked what was the disease, he at once pronounced it to be small pox. To the question, "Have you any doubt?" he replied, "None—it is the small pox —a very fine pock—if I had a dozen children to innoculate I should take that pock." My mother then related the case, from the woman's entrance into the stage coach to the decision of the medical conclave the day before. He listened with keen interest, and then broke out into a strong and somewhat profane denunciation of the "blockheads who propounded theories before they had a sufficient induction of facts, and then denied facts in order to maintain their

theories." My mother and he parted heartily pleased with each other.

Another illustration is furnished in her change of congregational connection. From the date of her marriage she had, with her husband, been a member of the congregation under the ministry of the Rev. Dr Hall, and after him under that of the Rev. Dr Brown, both of whom she held in the highest respect and regard. This connection she broke off in consequence of dissatisfaction with a particular decision of the kirk-session, to the great regret of the elders, of the minister, and especially of her husband and her family. If she erred in this step, it arose out of misapplication of the quality of her character under consideration—one of the noblest and one of the rarest to be met with—that of thinking and judging for herself, and acting out her conviction, independently of all human influence. And as what she did was with her a matter of conscience, it only remained for those connected with her to lament her decision and to respect herself.

The self-reliance, independence, and decision displayed in these instances appeared in a thousand others, and were, no doubt, strengthened and often moved by religious principle, so that

in the performance of duty she was neither deterred by the fear of offending, nor prompted by the solicitude of pleasing fellow-creatures, which so often, in inferior moral natures, impose silence, or induce connivance, acquiescence, or obsequious concurrence, in opposition to judgment and conviction.

To this attribute of her character may be largely traced her fidelity. Mrs A——, with whom she was intimate, and associated in benevolent operations, says—"I never knew any one so faithful as Mrs Renton. She used to say to me—'When you see good qualities in people, you are ready to take notice of them and to praise them; but when you see faults, you don't tell them of them, which you ought to do, and which were a greater kindness.' And I often noticed that those to whom she was so faithful respected her most."

Her Public Spirit.

She had a large share of public spirit, and, for a female, took a deep interest in politics, being ardently attached through life to popular liberty. The sentiments of her parents and of her husband no doubt favoured and fostered her own disposition and principles. But an interesting

circumstance in her early life had probably no small influence in giving to her character its prominent development in this direction. In 1793, when Mr. Thomas Muir, advocate, was a political prisoner in the Tolbooth, charged with sedition and treason, on no other grounds than that he had openly espoused those principles which the Hon Charles Grey (afterwards Earl Grey) advocated in the House of Commons, and nearly forty years after embodied in the Reform Bill of 1832, her parents, who highly esteemed Mr. Muir, and agreed with his opinions, were in the habit of providing him daily with a comfortable dinner from their own house, which the prison usages did not hinder, and she was wont to accompany the servant on those errands, and formed a reverential regard for the political martyr and for his principles, which extended to all who suffered like him in the same cause—Margarot, Palmer, Gerald, and Skirving. She had ever great sympathy with all who were tried or punished for political opinions, as distinguished from overt acts, and great dislike to all punishment of them; agreeing with those who hold, that, if political opinions are wrong, there is nothing like the freest public discussion to expose their folly or danger and bring them into discredit or

detestation, and that if they are right, truth and society suffer from their violent suppression. As I well remember, she readily credited the spy system under Castlereagh and Sidmouth with all the baseness and wickedness which its strongest opponents charged against it—she espoused the side of Queen Caroline as the victim of flagrant injustice, and regarded with indignation the motives and the method of her prosecution, emanating from one who had the least title to take part in such a suit—she rejoiced in the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts—she heartily concurred also in Roman Catholic Emancipation, though she abhorred the whole system of Popery, because she believed that no man should be subjected to civil disabilities on account of his religious opinions, and that punishment should be inflicted only on those who openly break the peace and order of society—she took a lively interest in the agitation for Political Reform and felt the highest satisfaction at its triumph—she entered with great zest into the Voluntary Controversy, reading the publications and attending the discussions, and became a fixed and zealous adherent to the principle that, for the interests alike of truth and of liberty, religion should be free of all State support and control.

She could not be indifferent to any of the great public questions which agitated society, but the movements and enterprises in which her own exertions were enlisted were those which were identified with the advancement of its moral interests.

In 1825 when Greece attracted much attention by the struggle for Independence, of which all friends of freedom then anticipated a successful and early issue, she conceived that one of the most effectual means of elevating that nation would be the education of the female population, which could be begun in the Ionian Islands under the British Protectorate. She got a committee of influential ladies formed, of which the venerable Lady Carnegie was president and herself secretary, and enlisted the cordial support from the platform (and perhaps his only discourse for a society from the pulpit,) of the Rev. Dr. M'Crie the biographer of Knox, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Thomson, the Rev. Henry Grey, and others. But after a great deal of trouble, and the equipment of two qualified agents, a succession of discouragements and difficulties led to the abandonment of the scheme. It is interesting to know that the work was seven years later begun at Athens by the American

Episcopal Society, and continues with a fair measure of success as far as it has been extended.

When the Temperance Reformation began, which proposed only abstinence from the use of spirits, she approved of it, and joined it, as conducive to the improvement of the working classes. But she soon became convinced that to allow the use of wines and other liquors must be invidious and offensive to those who could not afford them, and was indefensible in consistency and principle, and she adopted and acted upon the principle of Total Abstinence from all intoxicating liquors, before any society was based upon it, as the only proper and adequate ground for all who sought by such an organization to promote the cure or prevention of intemperance. To this cause her attachment never slackened. She aided it in all forms—by her example, her recommendation, her diffusion of publications, her distribution of tickets to lectures and soirees, her contributions in other forms, and most of all her personal exertions to reclaim the intemperate. There was, indeed, no form of sin which she so much detested or dreaded, as intemperance, believing it to be the inlet and most fruitful source of all other evils. To her own abstinence she

attributed in great measure the amazing elasticity and vigour of constitution which she enjoyed up to her 78th year, when suddenly struck down by palsy, and which enabled her so long to survive that shock with unimpaired mental faculties. So strong was her aversion to the use of spirits, that, even when prescribed by her medical advisers as a necessary stimulant, she refused it, and for a long time it was only in a medicated form, which destroyed the taste and smell, that they succeeded in administering it.

The Anti-Slavery cause was one in which from her youth her sympathies had been enlisted, and when the grand project was formed of the Total Abolition of Slavery she engaged in it with her whole heart, and was a member of the first Ladies' Committee formed in Edinburgh for its support, which, like the Temperance movement, shared her unslacking zeal and exertions through all her after-life. For after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire she continued with unabated ardour to aid the labours of the American Abolitionists, several of whom were among her friends and correspondents.

The Anti-Corn Law agitation of course secured her warmest support, as one whose success would bring with it inestimable benefits to the mass of

society, and the abatement of a crying injustice. When the co-operation of the ladies was sought by Bazaars on its behalf, she was second to none in promptitude and energy, and, not contented with what she did at home, undertook to provide and preside at one of the tables of the great bazaar in London, and amply redeemed her promise.

It only remains to notice the Peace Society. Of this she was a member and zealous supporter. A committee of ladies for its support held their monthly meetings in her house. She diligently circulated its publications, and in 1849 attended the Peace Congress at Paris. War, like Slavery, she accounted only an unmitigated evil, hostile to the law of God, contrary to all the interests of man, and repugnant to the spirit of Christ. She felt that holiness and peace were the bright attributes of the Redeemer's kingdom, and she rejoiced in the prospect of that blissful period, when, through His extended reign, men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up their sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

These were the more prominent public causes to which her interests and efforts were given,

and any one who knew her only in connection with one of them would have thought it was her hobby. But her zeal in one did not in the least abate her zeal in another; she seemed to have a whole heart for each; in this, as in other things, giving did not impoverish; the more her public spirit was exercised the more its range and sympathies extended; and many were the objects besides those mentioned, of a less conspicuous character, which shared what aid and impulse she could impart.

Her Benevolence.

In what has been advanced several indications must have been apparent of her Benevolence, than which no attribute of her character was more prominent, and which therefore claims special and particular notice. It was, indeed, so much a part of herself, that it is difficult to think of her in any relation of life without recalling it. It might have been originally a strong natural disposition, but it was nourished, purified, and strengthened by love to Christ, and through constant exercise it acquired all the power of the strongest habit. It pervaded all her plans, all her undertakings, and all her activities, prompting efforts, undertaking labours, encountering

difficulties, and braving dangers, before which any lesser principle would have quailed. It was as disinterested as energetic. Selfish people think first of themselves, their own claims, their own interests, their own ease, their own convenience, their own comforts. She thought first of others and last of herself, and was ready to overlook, to disregard, and to sacrifice her own, for the sake of benefitting others, and especially of relieving want or suffering, or of rescuing from sin. As a friend observed, who had known her well for fifty years, "But one passport was needed to enlist her interest—human misery; it mattered not what the age, or condition, or character of the patient." She dispensed temporal benefit hand-in-hand with spiritual—the temporal first, and that whether the spiritual was received or not; but where both were needed, the spiritual also, in advice, remonstrance, persuasion, reading, and distribution of tracts and books; and where the bodily was not required, but only the heart and the conscience needed to be dealt with, the spiritual alone.

Her's was no sentimental, spasmodic, imitative benevolence, begotten of fitful impulse, or fashion, or persuasion of neighbours, or other artificial influence. It was moved by the desire to do

good to suffering or indigent fellow-creatures, who came within her personal knowledge and capability of aid, and her thought was, What should I do for them? And whatever she concluded she ought to do she did forthwith, without waiting for the co-operation of others, and in nineteen cases out of twenty without seeking it. Notice of what she did by her fellow-creatures, or gratitude for it by the recipients of her benevolence, never seemed to enter into her thoughts. The object before her in every case was the present end to be reached of benefit to the indigent, or suffering, or wretched, or guilty, or perishing creature, on whose behalf her interest and energy were enlisted.

She was brought into contact with human misery and vice in all their forms; but the effect was not to repel and discourage her, but only to stimulate and strengthen her desires and resolutions to relieve and rescue as promptly and as greatly as she could. Her labours for these ends were not occasional, taking up an hour now and then, but habitual occupations, to which she gave more time and energy than many persons devote to the callings by which they earn their subsistence, and in which she was as instant as if her family's bread had depended on them.

Often she was disappointed, and often imposed upon. The seeming penitent relapsed into old sins. The struggling unfortunate, whom she had brought out of difficulties, and put in a way of well-doing, proved utterly unworthy. But such instances did not render her less ready to take up new cases, nor did she dwell upon, or repine at, the failures, frauds, and base deceptions, that she experienced. On the contrary, she seldom adverted to them, and held that we should endeavour to do good to the worthless, although we should fail in the attempt, and they should pervert and abuse the benefits rendered them. Her common remark, when such cases were mentioned, was, "It is a great pity, it cannot be helped, but better to have failed in a thousand attempts than to have neglected one that has been successful." Nor did she say much of her success. She was as little prone to boast of past fruits as to mope over past failures. She only considered what was before her, and addressed herself to new enterprises and labours of love with as much freshness as if they had been her first, and with as much solicitude to conduct them to a successful issue as if they were to be her last. "Not weary in well-doing" was emphatically one of her characteristics.

One department of her benevolent labours merits particular notice—that devoted to the reformation of female prisoners, first in the Bridewell of Edinburgh, and after its incorporation with the Prison, in the latter. Instead of attempting any account of these I shall only quote the testimony of the matron and governor.

Miss Aitken, who has been Matron of the Edinburgh Prison for the last 25 years, says, "that long before she entered on her present situation Mrs. Renton had been engaged in these labours; that she was in the habit of visiting, not once a week, as is the common rule with other ladies, but several times, and not in one class, or in one department, but in all; and that it would be impossible to tell the number of cases in which, through her exertions, discharged prisoners had been sent off as emigrants, or got situations at home, and the care and moral well-being of juvenile delinquents had been promoted."

Mr. Smith, the excellent Governor of the Prison, writes—"Mrs. Renton visited the prison, for the purpose of imparting religious instruction to the female prisoners, for upwards of thirty years, and the great patience and self-denial implied in these few words can only be fully known and appreciated by those who have been

earnestly and perseveringly engaged in the same kind of arduous duty. It would be difficult to overstate the zeal and earnestness with which she entered into the work. No kind of weather deterred her from making her visits, which, when she had pressing cases on hand, were almost daily; and she spared no amount of personal labour, not only in visiting the prisoners inside the prison, but also their friends outside to effect reconciliation between them, and to procure employment for the prisoners after their discharge. Severe domestic affliction, and even bereavement in her own family, was not allowed to stand in the way of active duty in her labours of love among the poor unfortunates of the prison; and she has been known to leave her own house to attend to them under circumstances which an ordinary Christian would have considered as a more than sufficient excuse for giving up all labours beyond the circle of her own family. But she was *not* an ordinary Christian. Deeply impressed with the importance of religious truth herself, she made an earnest, sustained, and continuous effort to impress the minds of others. She appeared as if continually saying to herself, and acting accordingly, 'My Saviour *died* for me, I must *live* for Him—I must work while it is day—the night cometh.'"

One of the most striking instances of the fruits of her prison labours is given in the following extract from a letter of one of her granddaughters :—"While A——— and I were staying with grandmamma in 1848 she took us repeatedly to the prison, when visiting Sarah Brannon, who was then awaiting her trial. She was a very ignorant woman, of Irish extraction, could neither read nor write, and, beyond knowing there was a God and a hell, was without religion. In a drunken quarrel with her husband, she had flung a stool at him and killed him. On coming to her senses, and finding what she had done, she was in great grief for her husband, but felt none for her sin. When brought to prison she was so ignorant and so brutish as to seem incapable of understanding right from wrong ; and because her case seemed so desperate grandmamma took her in hand, visiting her almost daily for many weeks, talking and praying with her, and by the time her trial came on she had learned to view her crime in a proper light. Passing over grandmamma's conferences with her counsel, all that could be done in her behalf was done, and she was sentenced to imprisonment for life. As she shewed herself increasingly grateful for all that was done for her,

and attentive to all that was spoken to her, grandmamma got her detained as long as possible in Edinburgh, and ere she was transferred to Perth had the joy of seeing her a converted woman. From Perth she was removed to Brixton in 1851, and grandmamma made a point of writing to her every quarter, which is as often as prisoners there are permitted to receive letters. Having known about her from the first I afterwards wrote many of the letters sent her by grandmamma, and very tender they were, telling her of herself and her family, and of mission work and revivals,—the family affairs, to shew her she was esteemed as a friend,—and the mission and revival work, to stimulate her to increased prayer for Christ's kingdom. Sarah was allowed all the mitigations admissible in her condition, though they were few, and she stood high in the estimation of the chaplain and matron as a pious Christian woman. Very sad she sometimes was, still never murmured, and often wrote, that "next to the Saviour, she loved her one friend on earth to whose instrumentality she owed both her present life and that which is to come." Her letters would have done credit to a superior person in the lower rank, for their good composition, spelling, and penmanship. In

1851 grandmamma visited her, and received a gift of a curious piece of fancy work intended as a picture of herself. It was made out of shop sweepings sent to the prison, and shewed how every detail of grandmamma's dress had been stereotyped in the poor woman's memory. The figure she had sewed in worsted and silk. The face was only a line of silk thread, and, of course, bore no resemblance. But the grey silk bonnet was unmistakable, as well as the black satin cloak, and the brown brocaded dress, and little hand-bag—grandmamma's walking dress of 1848, in fact, which is quite fresh in my memory. Her letters would have been interesting relics of one, amongst the many, whom grandmamma saved with a 'double salvation.' I had promised to grandmamma to keep up the correspondence after her death, but the opportunity was not given me, for Sarah died only a few weeks after her; and now we can only think of them as singing together the praises of redeeming grace before the throne."

Mrs. B., formerly assistant to the matron in the prison, and afterwards successively matron of the Dean Bank Institution, and of the Magdalen Asylum, has supplied me with several cases which it is not necessary to relate, adding, "that Mrs.

Renton took up cases that others would have given up as hopeless, and that it is only a little of the good she did that one person can tell." She also informed me that Mrs. Renton had a furnished room provided at Hope Park End for the accommodation of any respectable woman out of a situation, in which many years ago she (Mrs. B.) had herself once lived for two months.

Mrs A., an intimate friend, bears the following testimony :—"Mrs. Renton's benevolence was so great that I was often prevented from mentioning cases and causes to her from the fear of an undue demand upon her means, for she was always so ready to give. If there was real distress she would not withhold relief on account of the worthlessness of the applicant. She often judged people so correctly that their conduct just corresponded with her estimate of what it would be. On other occasions it was different, but disappointments or bad requitals had no effect in abating her disposition to help the next case which came before her."

As an illustration of discrimination conjoined with courage, or some would say temerity, in her endeavours to recover a penitent, and restore her to well-doing and usefulness, the following case may be given. A young woman called one

day with a pitiable tale, soliciting compassion and assistance in getting a situation as a domestic servant. She was closely interrogated and told to call back. Mrs. R. inquired about her at her last mistress, and got an account the most unfavourable of her character. When the young woman called back, Mrs. R. told her what she had done and what she had learned. The woman burst into tears and shewed great distress, saying—"It was all over with her, she hoped to get into a place where she would have a chance to amend, but now she could have no hope." Mrs. R. replied "I do not mean to say that. I know what you are, and what you have been. But I will take you into my house, and give you a chance." This was done. She was employed as housemaid, shewed an earnest desire to do her duty, and went on for several months satisfactorily. Mrs. R. had to go from home and hesitated what to do, as there were a variety of articles, comprising silver plate. required for common use, which were under the girl's ordinary charge. From what she had observed of the young woman she concluded that to commit them to the care of another would shew a want of confidence in her, and discourage her, and perhaps tempt her to relax

her resolution, and prevent her further progress, and she decided to trust her with them just as when at home. On returning, she found her trust justified and rewarded by the servant's fidelity, and by the encouragement and confirmation thereby given to her course of improvement, which had a satisfactory issue.

Another instance of the decision and success of her benevolence may be related. Learning that a superior young woman, who had for many years been a faithful and active servant in the family, in whom she felt great interest, over whom she had great influence, and who then resided in the neighbourhood of her home in Peebleshire, was falling into a habit of intoxication, she went out to deal with her. Finding that she could not get an opportunity of conversing privately with her, except by remaining over the night, and could not have accommodation, except by sharing her bed, she resolved to do both, and urged upon the young woman, as indispensible for her salvation, instant and total abstinence, and with it separation from her present connections by emigration to America, for which she promised assistance in outfit, and an introduction that would secure her a good situation there. She gave her a fortnight to

make up her mind, with the alternative that she must follow her counsel, or she would have nothing more to do with her. The young woman's father came to Edinburgh, and pleaded with Mrs. R. to make some other arrangement, and dispense with the emigration. But she was inexorable, knowing that his home was one of the chief sources of danger. The young woman obeyed her counsel, adopted the abstinence resolution, emigrated, was steadfast, went forward, and for many years has been a minister's wife and a respected mother in the United States.

An old domestic, whose testimony has been already quoted, said, "Many a time in climbing stairs in the Grassmarket and Canongate, I wondered how Mrs. Renton had ever been able to get up them, and visit the poor creatures I was sent to. When I came in at night she would say to me—'Are you very tired?'—or, 'you say you can aye gang an errand if you have something to carry.' And I would say 'O aye, mem, I can aye do that.' Then would she say, 'There are some things I want you to take to such an one.' She was never done giving, and when she thought that a thing was needed at the present she was impatient if it was not done at once. There were a number to whom

she gave so much weekly. One poor woman who had a worthless drunken husband kept a small shop, selling sweeties and vegetables to provide for her children. Mrs. Renton found out that she sold some of her bits of things on the Sabbath day, and she gave her a shilling a week to give up that, which was more than the little profit she had by the things she sold, and kept her from breaking the Sabbath. Within two weeks of her death Mrs. Renton said to me, 'You will go and give that woman four shillings, she has not been paid these last two weeks.' Mrs. Renton had been so ill and so low, and I had been so much taken up with her, that I had quite forgotten that case, and wondered when she minded it. As long as she was able to go about, her hand was never out of her pocket, and I never saw anybody give away money so freely as she did."

Her life was marked by many voluntary sacrifices, not seldom, perhaps, misspent, for the undeserving, the deceitful, and the impostor, yet in numerous instances rendered for respectable persons in indigent circumstances, who did not come within the range of ordinary charity, and were truly grateful. "Without covetousness," she received with contentment and gratitude what-

ever share of this world's goods Providence put into her hand, and thought only of the best and the most she could do with such means as she had. She gave away much, all she possessed of her own, and all that she could spare off her own expenses, or off those of her household. Many a journey she travelled by a third-class train, and many a time she walked to save a cab, solely that she might give the difference to the poor. Denying herself the additional comfort or rest which another half-crown or five shillings would have afforded, she was ready the next hour to expend double the sum on some fresh appeal to her charity. She was "rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate"—her "charity never failed"—she trode in the footsteps of Him, who "went about doing good," who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," who had compassion on the hungry, the diseased, the helpless, the bereaved, the ignorant, and them that are out of the way—and she ever "remembered how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Her Activity.

It is abundantly apparent that among her prominent characteristics was Activity. For this she was formed by nature, and fitted by her whole training and habits. Nor could one observe her motions, or look upon her countenance, without discerning it. She had a light, well-knit, elegant person, of great agility and nerve. and, in conjunction with it, a constitution of remarkable health and vigour, which she sustained by the most regular habits and the strictest temperance. She had a finely-formed countenance, and beautiful skin and complexion, with a brow of strong mental development, and her expression was that of intelligence, vivacity, and decision. Her life was one of great activity. That may be said of some women who perform a multiplicity of domestic duties, and of some engaged in business, who in their several spheres display a method, alacrity, energy, and perseverance, not surpassed by the most diligent, systematic, and enterprising of the other sex in any walk of industry. But although the labours of such individuals may be very numerous and arduous, they are usually very limited in their range and in their motive, and restricted in sphere and interest to the family

or to business. Her's, on the contrary, were manifold and various. While in her household no woman could be more active, and orderly, and thorough, in all departments and details, than she was for many years; and in whatever related to the welfare of any member of her family no mother could be more alert, assiduous, and self-denied; it was in the sphere of benevolence that she found her most congenial element, and delighted to expend her energies—in zealously co-operating with others in the public causes of temperance, liberty, and religion—and still more in unremitting, private, single, and unaided efforts for individuals within her personal knowledge, whose claims consisted in their suffering, destitution, exposure to temptation, or wickedness. Of such cases the number which successively engaged her earnest concern and endeavours during a period of forty years must have been very large.

She kept no record of her own doings. Of her pecuniary intromissions she was accustomed daily to set down an exact account, so as always to know her current means, and to secure punctuality and promptitude in the discharge of all her liabilities. But when these accounts had served their purpose for the quarter or the year,

she had no further need of them, no other person had any business with them, and she destroyed them. So it was with her little books of memoranda. Of her visits, of her letters, of her labours, of the persons on whose behalf they were expended, or of the time devoted to them day by day, she kept no record. Nor did any member of her family at any time know all that she did or had in hand. She never related how many calls she had made, how many persons she had visited, how much time she had spent on this or that work of charity, and least of all how much money she had expended, for often she had exceeded her present means and drawn upon the future. Frequently, indeed, particular cases were fully detailed that at the time absorbed her interest, and there were at all times a variety of cases well-known to servants, or members of the family, or other friends, who were more or less employed in carrying out her benevolent operations. But such were ever only a portion of those she had on hand. Her own talent, ingenuity, promptitude, and energy, while health lasted, enabled her in most things to do herself, more quickly, more easily, and more satisfactorily, what she wished to be done, than she could get it done by others. And therefor

it was her habit, as well as her maxim, never to do by others, or at second-hand, what she could as well or better do herself. This consumed a great deal of time, but with her astonishing activity, and the diligence, heartiness, and despatch, with which she discharged her successive duties, it is no exaggeration to say, that she often overtook as much in a day, as other active and benevolent ladies would have accounted ample work for a week. She had no leisure for superfluous writing or reading, and she trusted to an excellent memory, which was one of the faculties that she had through life greatly cultivated. That book of remembrance superseded with her all diaries and records of pen and ink, and from it alone could have been drawn a full and faithful account, during the term of her unbroken activity, of even a single week's manifold occupations. Yet, I am persuaded, that had we the full record of them for every week, and month, and year, we should only find in predominant measure and in constant succession the cases of indigent widows, neglected children, well-doing wives or husbands with ill-doing spouses, struggling or suffering individuals to be aided or relieved, fallen women to be rescued, discharged felons to be employed, imprisoned

criminals to be converted. She began her personal efforts before there were any public associations for reclaiming drunkards, or recovering the fallen, or reforming young criminals, or educating ragged children, and she continued them until the last, while hailing and rejoicing in the various institutions formed for these objects.

To her duty and opportunity were ever so obvious and pressing, that she was always full of work for the present; and results were so entirely with God, and His promises were so sure, that she was always full of hope for the future. What to make of herself, or how to fill up time, were questions with which she was never troubled. She was a stranger to idleness and to *ennui*. Her life daily and hourly was a practical illustration of the precept "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

Religion.

The last of the leading traits of her character, which claims notice, is Religion. It obtained an early hold upon her mind, and exerted a powerful influence upon her character and conduct. From the time she distinctly apprehended that

salvation is free and complete to the sinner, who depends simply and singly on Christ as the Divine Surety, who has done and suffered everything needful for his pardon and acceptance with God, she seems to have had a greater or less measure of peace, and hope, and gratitude, and love, that formed as it were the wellspring of her happiness and of her life. She had been taught that system of doctrine which is contained in the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly, and she found it with enlarging experience to accord with the Scriptures.

But the Scriptures themselves were her great teacher. It was her fixed habit at all seasons, and in all circumstances, to read at least two chapters for her private lesson in the morning, and two at night. For a long period she yearly read through in regular course the whole Scriptures once, and the Psalms and New Testament twice. In conjunction with that exercise she also used some little book with its daily text or short lesson. Nor did she find that company, or pressure of affairs, rendered it difficult, either at the beginning or close of the day, to perform this duty. On lying down she was wont to fix her mind upon some passage of Scripture, and to meditate on it till she fell asleep, desiring every

night to have her last thoughts occupied with things divine. Her physical powers had during the day been in full play, her mind was at peace, and through long years she nightly experienced the full import of the testimony, "So He giveth His beloved sleep." In the exact posture in which she fell asleep she was wont to lie, breathing softly as an infant, for six or seven hours, enjoying unbroken rest, and then to awake refreshed, and forthwith arise.

As in private religious duties, so in those of the sanctuary, she was punctual and steadfast. No one was readier to attend public sermons, or meetings for benevolent objects, without reference to sect or party. But at the stated times for public worship on the Lord's Day she attended faithfully the ministrations of her own pastor. The distance of her residence was about two miles, and, after she had reached those years when for such a distance on a week day she habitually used a cab, she would have gone forth on the Sabbath morning, even despite wind and rain, and trudged it on foot, to save work, for which necessity could not be pleaded, though at the expense of mercy to herself, and especially to avoid tempting any poor cabman to stay from church.

The congregations with which after marriage she was connected were, first, that successively under the ministry of the Rev. Dr James Hall and the Rev. Dr John Brown, and next, that of the Rev. Dr. Peter Davidson, whom she highly esteemed for his principles, gifts, and attainments. To it after leaving Broughton Place she clung through the remainder of her life with steadfast attachment, fulfilling the various duties of a member: with what fidelity, zeal, and liberality, the testimony of the minister appended to this sketch attests. However multiplied and pressing might be the demands upon her benevolence in other forms, they were never allowed to interfere with, and far less to abate, her interest in and her contributions for gospel ordinances and missionary objects.

That public spirit, disinterestedness, and zeal, which she evinced in other causes, no less marked her piety. And here I shall avail myself of an extract from the address of the Rev. William B. Robertson of Irvine, at the missionary meeting of the United Presbyterian Synod, May 11, 1864, in allusion to the death of her son Alexander:—

"A missionary of your own, on whom the grave closed and Heaven opened some six months since —he was my dearest friend and fellow-student

twenty years ago in Germany—a man of gentlest manners, princely bearing, rich gifts, and rare accomplishments—gave himself, with all his gifts and his accomplishments, to the comparatively humble task of teaching your poor blacks over in Jamaica, and literally worked himself to death in faithfulness to God's work there. So when he had come home in last green summer time to die, and place, as winter darkened over us, an honoured missionary's grave in your Grange Cemetery 'beside the grave of Chalmers,' I said to his venerable mother, still sorrowing at his return—'Your son is really a martyr—a martyr to the missionary cause.' 'Yes,' she replied, with truly Spartan Roman Christian heroism in most sorrowful and loving mother's heart—'yes, and had I a hundred sons I would be proud to see them all the same.' The noble spirit of the Spartan mother has not died out yet—or spirit of those brave old Roman mothers that could give their sons to die in battle for the Commonwealth and conquest of the world—or rather, let me say, the spirit of the Abraham that 'by faith offered up his son upon the altar,' and of those holy women, also, in the days of old, that did 'by faith receive their dead raised to life again,'—as this most noble mother too has done, following

her martyr son in a few weeks to glory, where Christ, beside whose cross they stood together steadfastly on earth, has said, 'woman, behold thy son,' and 'son, behold thy mother.'" [1]

Her religion, like her benevolence, was not emotional nor sentimental. Dictated by principle,

[1] Of this son a biographical notice appeared in the Missionary Record of the United Presbyterian Church for January 1864. And a Monument erected over his grave by his brother William bears the following inscription:—

TO THE MEMORY OF
THE REV. ALEXANDER RENTON,
THEOLOGICAL TUTOR TO THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF JAMAICA,
AND PASTOR OF MOUNT OLIVET CONGREGATION
IN THAT ISLAND,
WHO DIED AT KELSO, OCTOBER 25, 1863,
AGED 43 YEARS,
AND IS HERE INTERRED.

Amiable, graceful, and devout,
An accomplished scholar,
And a good minister of Jesus Christ,
He was esteemed and loved by all who knew him,
Especially by his Missionary brethren
In Jamaica,
Who, anticipated by a brother's love
In their design
To erect over his hallowed grave
A Stone of Remembrance,
Have obtained permission to inscribe on it
This Memorial.

animated by love, and guided by understanding, it was thoroughly practical. She had no notion of fine sentiments and feelings that exerted no influence upon the character, or of a profession which did not justify itself by practice. She had no objection to associate with secular persons for secular ends, or to co-operate for a good end with all who would take part in its promotion, but she would not for its furtherance consent to any compromise of religious principle. To no cause had she throughout life been more staunch and ardent in her attachment than that of the Abolition of Slavery; but when an influential organ of the American Abolitionists lent its columns for the diffusion of infidel sentiments, she objected to the Ladies' Society, with which she was connected, continuing to it their support, while, on account of the great services it had rendered to the one cause for which they were associated, the majority declined to withdraw it. The result was a split, and the formation of a second society of which she continued President till her death. A better view than can be presented by another, of her spirit and principles in this transaction, is happily supplied by a letter of her own—one of the few to members of her family which happen to have

been preserved and to have come under my notice. Like most of them, written off-hand, it is not the less characteristic.[1]

As with societies so it was with periodicals. Though the friend of free discussion in all things, she considered it inconsistent and sinful in a Christian to support a publication which habitually assails principles he holds sacred, or advocates those he accounts detrimental to religion or morality. On these grounds she discarded the *Scotsman* from her house.

No gloom, nor groaning, nor fear, nor doubt, was associated with her religion. Strong faith was ever operative in good works, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. On being told one day by a minister of a worthy woman who was sitting dejected, crying, "My leanness, my leanness," she replied, "It would be more befitting her to say 'My laziness, my laziness." Her long term of health had been spent in well-doing, and when years of suffering were dispensed to her—'For what son is he, whom the father chasteneth not?'—she bore the trial with fortitude, without desponding, or repining, or doubting. Her principles were all fixed, her views all clear, her conclusions all

1 See letter, dated Edinburgh, 7th March 1856.

settled, and all that she heard, witnessed, or experienced, only confirmed or illustrated them. In these days of darkness the Scriptures continued to her a pillar of fire, the only other reading she relished, or latterly listened to, consisting of accounts of revivals and missionary operations, tracts, and occasionally a volume, one of the last she heard through being "Romaine's Life of Faith." A favourite sentiment of hers was that of the Psalmist—"Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

In singling out and dwelling on her leading characteristics, others, less prominent, have been passed over, though among those doubtless are several not unworthy of notice, as references in the letters of friends since her death suggest. One recals "the influence of moral purity which her presence ever diffused"—another "her hospitality to strangers"—another "the comfort, strength, and encouragement, which her warm sympathy, cheering counsel, and emboldening decision imparted in depression and difficulty"—another "her true womanliness in all circumstances, even where most resolute and energetic"—another "her little account of money, unless for charitable uses, quoting often the quaint

saying, 'What I gave I have, what I spend I lose, what I leave is not mine, but theirs who come after me'"—another "her humility"—another "her love and kindness to children." On the last two a few observations may be added.

No one rejoiced more in the prosperity and honour of any one in whom she was interested, or was less disposed to undervalue legitimate elevation or greatness of any kind, or, had she been placed in a higher social sphere, would have been more ready to appreciate its advantages, and maintain its dignity, as well as to fulfil its obligations, and occupy its opportunities of promoting the benevolent objects she had at heart. But the words addressed to Baruch—"Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not"—conveyed to her no challenge, and imposed on her no restraint. Free of avarice, she was also, as regarded worldly possessions and honours, devoid of ambition. That saying of the Lord had sunk into her heart—"I am among you as he that serveth." A worthy lady, who felt every new duty, or care, or cross, or difficulty, to be something formidable, and continually resorted to her for advice and assistance, said one day—"Oh, that this conflict was over, and the crown won, and I were sitting in the kingdom!"

"Sitting with a crown!" was her response—"to be an errand girl there would be the height of my ambition."

Her love of children was strong: she was full of kindness to them, was a great favourite with them, and her compassion and care went out specially to the fatherless and the orphan, among whom many a young heart was made glad by her. She had no sympathy with what is called the Malthusian doctrine. In all ranks she held legitimate children to be the greatest temporal gifts which parents or society could receive, and was highly displeased when pity or regret was expressed on account of an accession to a poor man's family, who was struggling to provide for those he already had. In such cases, among the objects of her interest, she was forward with her congratulation, and if there were twins, with a double gift, accounting them "an heritage of the Lord," and each accession therefore a source of fresh joy, a new incentive to well-doing, and another pledge that "the Lord will provide."

Her expansive sympathies and unwearied beneficence gave her a high place in the estimation of many. But perhaps the sentiments with which she was most deeply and most widely regarded were those cherished toward a parent, whose kind-

ness, exertions, and fidelity inspire affection and gratitude, reliance and respect. I remember my first teacher saying of her one day, with much emotion, "She is the mother of all living," which I did not then understand. But often since I have heard the testimony—"She has been a mother to me" or "to us." A few years ago an honoured and veteran missionary spoke to me of her as "your mother and mine." More than one minister of Christ it was her happiness to have "oft-refreshed," and not a few among the widowed and afflicted and poor of His people had "great joy and consolation in her love."

But her excellences were not unaccompanied with defects; on the contrary they were closely connected with them. For the chief of the latter seemed to me to spring from the predominance of the former, and to be in a manner their excrescences. So strong was the impulse of her benevolence, that an over-readiness to obey it led her occasionally to overlook, forget, or disregard the comfort or feelings of others, who had prior or stronger claims to her consideration than the individual she sought to benefit. Again, so strong was her self-reliance, that she was led occasionally to undertake what could not be accomplished without an amount of trouble,

labour, and expenditure, utterly disproportioned to the end, and also, it might be, misspent for the unworthy. The strong will would have its way, and it was sometimes unreasonable, setting at nought all objections, or even declining to consider them. The consciousness that she was actuated by no selfish nor sinister motive seemed to brace her inflexibility. She was so accustomed to deny herself, and to subordinate personal ease, convenience, feeling, and inclination to duty or beneficence, which were with her almost synonymous, that she was apt to under-estimate the difficulty of these sacrifices in others, whose concurrence or co-operation was necessary to the accomplishment of her object. Yet these deductions, and all others that could be adduced by the most unfriendly scrutinizer of her life and character, leave the brightness undimmed, and the magnitude undiminished, of her moral excellences.

As time runs on, and lengthening separation from her favours a more deliberate and impartial estimate of what she was, she more and more appears to me to have exhibited, beyond any other person I have known, some of the highest and rarest attributes of the Christian character. In no other have I seen Christian beneficence so

accordant with the Scripture delineations of it. Of no other am I so often reminded in perusing these delineations, and the inspired exhortations to its practice. When I read in the Old Testament such passages as the following—"Blessed is he that considereth the poor:"—or, "A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth. He is gracious, and full of compassion and righteous. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever"—or, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"—her character rises to my view—not as bearing some resemblance to that described—but as its literal and full counterpart. And in the examples set forth of female diligence, courage, fortitude, hospitality, under the influence of faith, she recurs to me as one in whom similar conduct under corresponding circumstances would have been quite natural. So again, when I read in the New Testament the commendation of the woman at Bethany, "She hath done what she could:"—or of Dorcas, "She was full of good works and alms deeds which she did:"—or the

description of the Christian widow, "well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work,"—I think of her as one to whom each of these testimonies is no less literally and fully applicable.

It is a high privilege to her children to have had such a mother. It is a high privilege to their children to have had such a grandmother. The character and example of progenitors are of powerful influence upon their descendants, and when eminent for moral excellence entail high obligation to follow them, but much dishonour on those who depart from them. Oh! that each of her grandchildren may deserve from some eminent faithful servant of the Lord, speaking with intimate knowledge of their principles and character, such a testimony as Paul bears to Timothy, when he says, "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also." To her sons and daughters, to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, the words may in conclusion be addressed with utmost affection and

earnestness, which are employed to the Hebrews, after reminding them of "the work and labour of love shewn towards God's name" by those who had been patterns of cheerful, assiduous, persevering, ministration to the saints:— "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

SKETCH
OF
MRS. RENTON'S CHARACTER,
BY THE REV. DR. DAVIDSON,

At the close of his discourse, Lord's Day, December 27, 1863.

In presenting a slight sketch of the character of "the handmaid of the Lord," who was so long connected with this congregation and devoted to its interests, but who has now been separated from us to join, I doubt not, the blessed company of "the spirits of the just made perfect," —all that I can offer is a faint outline of some of the more prominent features of that character.

Among these I mention, first, the natural intensity or force of Mrs. Renton's character. This might have been read in her countenance and seen in her gait, but it could be fully realised only by observing the great activity and perseverance with which she followed out any purpose which she had deliberately formed, and surmounted

whatever difficulties lay in her way. In this feature, I have sometimes thought that she somewhat resembled the Apostle of the Gentiles, and that, placed in the same position and circumstances, she would have acted in the same way, —whether you think of him *before* or *after* his conversion. She had, undoubtedly, much of the same energy of mind, the same intensity of purpose. With this was associated a very remarkable degree of moral courage and fearlessness. Hardly anything could daunt her in performing, or attempting, what she felt to be dutiful. With her light and delicate-looking frame she would have faced alone undertakings, or obstacles, from which seven strong men would have turned aside and fled. I believe that she had a strong affection for her relatives and friends; and she often shewed even a peculiar measure of respect for the customs and conventionalities of society; but if either or both of these had stood in the way of what she esteemed duty, she would have broken through them without hesitation, or even laughed them to scorn, in order to pursue the path which her conscience or heart pointed out. This sometimes gave her conduct a peculiarity, or even eccentricity, which others could not appreciate

or approve ; and without doubt she may have occasionally erred here ; but the characteristic itself was a stamp of true nobility, and without it she could not have accomplished one-tenth of the good it was given her to do. Another remarkable feature of her character, or fact of her history, was the power which she was able to exercise over others. She had little of what is called "the logical faculty;" but with an extensive knowledge of men and things, derived from observation and experience, and with an intuitive perception of what was "true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report," she was generally able to lay hold at once of the truth on any practically important subject ; she felt that truth intensely, and was able to state it and plead for it strongly ; and thus she generally gained over to her own way of thinking and acting those with whom she had intercourse. In the history of this congregation many instances could easily be mentioned in which her thoughts became, if I may so speak, the seeds of action in others ; and we have good reason for believing that this same power was often successfully employed by her both in rescuing the fallen and preserving the exposed—especially the young in whom she always felt a peculiar interest---

from the paths of error and vice—"pulling them out of the fire."

But it is of the religious character of our departed mother and friend that I am called chiefly to speak—of her *graces* rather than her *gifts*. And what almost need be said, or can be said, more of her religious character than that she was truly, what she has often been called, "a mother in Israel?" And she was so in every sense in which the expression could well be employed. Or what can be said more of her graces than that in her whole career, so long at least as I have been acquainted with her, was to be seen a bright exemplification of "these three, faith, hope, charity"—the faith, hope, and charity which the gospel teaches and produces. Her *faith* was strong and lively and fruitful. It was not a "faith without works, which is dead." She had a clear apprehension of "the truth as it is in Jesus," a strong conviction of it, and a fervent love for it. I need mention no other evidence of this than that of which the most of you were witnesses, namely, her intense devotion to the ordinances of the gospel, leading her while health and strength permitted to give so exemplary and self-denying an attendance on them, and prompting also that liberality in

their support for which she was so distinguished. And, in her case, these external proofs of devotion to the truth were, unquestionably, accompanied and sanctified by earnest and unremitting prayer in secret for the prosperity and progress of the truth. She had great confidence in the word and promises of God, and, I have no doubt, pleaded them daily, "praying without ceasing," both for the spread of the cause and truth of God in the world generally, and for their success as connected with this congregation. We have all need, my friends, to learn to pray more abundantly and perseveringly for the success of the gospel among ourselves, seeing we have undoubtedly lost one of the Lord's remembrancers in this matter,—one who obeyed from the heart the Divine charge, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

As to *hope*, our departed friend was, without exception, the most illustrious example of it with whom I have met. She was naturally of a hopeful disposition, and the faith of the truth engrafted on this produced not merely what the Apostle calls "good hope through grace," but "the full assurance of hope." She never expressed,

and apparently never felt the slightest doubt of her own salvation through Christ. Even through all the long and weary years in which she endured "a great fight of affliction," I do not recollect of her ever expressing, or hinting at, any doubt on this point, or indicating that she needed to be confirmed or comforted in regard to it. Her thoughts and feelings did not seem to run in this direction at all. Her great desire *then*, indicating what was her chief feeling of need, was for that beautiful and becoming attendant of hope, *patience*—patience under her great and almost unintermitting bodily sufferings. O how often did she ask me to pray *that she might have patience!* And it may well be believed that one of the great ends in view with her lengthened-out distress was to teach her—to work in her this gracious attainment, "that patience might have its perfect work, that she might be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

As to her *charity* (and I use the word both in its scriptural and in its more customary acceptation) it may well be said, *it never failed.* Of that bastard charity that makes no difference between truth and falsehood, she had none. Loving Him who is the source of truth, she loved all who were of the truth, "for the truth's

sake" which was in them. And she loved and honoured, also, all who loved righteousness and peace, to whatever sect or party they belonged. She had a very catholic spirit. But she hated and denounced error and falsehood wherever they might be found. "In her eyes a vile person was contemned, but she honoured them that feared the Lord." "She rejoiced not in iniquity, but rejoiced in the truth." Yet this did not prevent her from sympathising with the poor and wretched and outcast, however criminal they had been. It led her rather to seek out the worst of these and minister to them both in spiritual and temporal things; and many, I doubt not, of the very worst of criminals have had reason in both respects to bless her and call her blessed. "She did good, as she had opportunity, to all, especially to them who were of the household of faith." But it would require a volume, I believe, to give a suitable history of her public and private charities and activities—her efforts on behalf of all classes of the destitute, the miserable, and the oppressed—her devotion to every kind of good; and I simply add that I have never known any person intimately to whom, in my estimation, the language of the great Judge, from the throne of judgment, would more fully

and pointedly and literally apply: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Of the closing scenes of Mrs. Renton's life, or of the certainty of her victory over death, I do not deem it necessary to speak. During the last few weeks of her life her conflict with pain seemed to be incessant, and when this ceased, during the last days of her pilgrimage, her consciousness and power of hearing and of utterance were almost wholly taken away, so that it was not permitted her to leave behind her any parting testimony to the power and excellence of the Christian faith. The certainty of her victory over death is to be learned from the character of her life, and from the testimony of Scripture; and comparatively seldom, I should think, could the words of the Apostle have been more appropriately used than by her, or the words of the Spirit than in reference to her: "I am now

ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me in that day." "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth, —that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Let it be our concern to imitate the example of our departed friend, the lesson of whose life may be said to be "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Amen.

The following Extracts, from the handful that remains of her Letters to members of her family, few, and for the most part fragmentary, though they be, afford better glimpses of such traits of her character as they disclose than the foregoing pages supply, just as a broken likeness, in which some of the features are distinct, conveys a truer idea of the countenance than any description of it.

EXTRACTS FROM HER LETTERS.

1. *To her son Henry.*[1]

Edinburgh, 20th Feb. 1823.

My Dear Henry,—I have considered and re-considered your letter. I have entered into all your feelings, and do feel with you and for you with a minuteness and multiplicity of tender emotions which can only be felt by a mother, whose whole soul is on the alert for your present comfort and future usefulness. You still complain of my severity, but were I to mention the different little things I have heard from time to time you would not. Can love be severe? Think if it is possible. And in proportion as I have had that affection exercised towards you, which is of the purest nature the human heart is susceptible of on this side of heaven, its yearnings are anxious and large, nothing else than all that is lovely and all that is manly can satisfy me.

[1] Then a philosophical student at Glasgow College.

I said I have entered into all your feelings. But upon second thoughts I don't think I ever felt a shade of despair. I have been a child of hope since I was fourteen years of age, and to the present day I am still supported by it, not only for eternity, but even for the present life; and although she often soars very high in my mind, and is often dashed to the ground, yet I have always sure consolation that as my day is my strength shall be.

But, Henry, you must bear with me. I am coming very near. I have discovered something in your letter that tells me there is a source of disquiet in your mind to which I am an utter stranger. I leave it to your own prudence to disclose it or not Far be it from me to have a wish to extort any thing from you that would give you pain.

Sabbath was my birth-day and the day that my dear, dear Rachel died, or, I should rather say, was born into eternity. It is always a solemn season to me. I devote that day to her memory and to humiliation, to which the Sabbath is very congenial. I don't know how it was, but you were much obtruded upon my thoughts. But I must not say more.

Mrs. H. has come in to get her son T. lodged

or boarded somewhere. I have advised her much to send him to Mr. L. for the first quarter at least. Although the charge is higher than she can afford, yet the first impression in Edinburgh is of such consequence, particularly to a medical student. I have undertaken to go and see what is the lowest Mr. L. would take.

No one joins me in kind love, for no one knows I am writing you. When I received your last I gave your love to father, Agnes, etc. He did not ask a sight of it, and it was as well, as he has shewn none of your letters to me. I will conclude with committing you unto Him who is able to keep you and guide you, although His path be sometimes in the sea and His footsteps hidden.—Your very affectionate mother,

AGNES RENTON.

2. *To the same at Kelso.*

In a letter dated Humbie House, 27th July 1831, speaking of a heavy relative trial, she says—

"But, alas! my high hopes are now dashed to the ground. Infinite wisdom knows best what crosses I require. He can and will support me. In His faithfulness I have joy and

peace. I fear no evil, for the Lord is my God. To feel this is to be weighed down with gratitude and love. Oh, the mighty privilege to be permitted to breathe in the atmosphere of *reconciliation*, how much more to have access to Him at all times! I often remember you and yours to my Father. I have but one request for you, and that is, that you may every day see more and more of your own nothingness, and more and more of His all-sufficiency, who hath separated you to the ministry.

"When you eat your New Testament feast[1] think on me; and when you pray for those who are necessarily detained at home, bear me on your heart amongst the number.

"Christina is with me and she is very kind. All the boys are well and happy. I suppose your father will return on Wednesday next."

3. *To the same.*

In a letter dated Edinburgh, March 17, 1832, referring to a loss of several thousand pounds which her husband had sustained by the fraudulent conduct of others, she says—

[1] The Communion at Kelso was on the succeeding Lord's Day.

"I have made up my mind to look for nothing better than losses and crosses, and if we are only chastised *in the slightest way* that God corrects his children we have no cause to complain."

4. *To the same.*

In a letter dated Lasswade, 2nd February 1836, she says—

"The way that you look at C.'s marriage does not surprise me, although it is a very different view from what I take. You do not appear to me to have eyes *before* and *behind*, for you only look at coming events, and that with a very drumly eye, if not an inflamed one, for which reason I will not now write you as I otherwise would have done, knowing that light is always painful to diseased eyes. However, the glass of God's Word can be looked into at all times, and if you will look through it at what has passed in the family for the last six years, you will then perhaps be constrained to cry out, 'whereas I was *blind* now I see.'

"I would be sorry to think that your days of health were so much as on the wane. I can tell you for your encouragement, that this time four years ago, when my prospects of life were very

small, the Lord made me to feel that He was my strong tower, and now when He has been pleased to give me renewed health He has given me the desire to lay it out for His glory."

5. *To her son John Thomson, then in London.*

New Garden, 14th July 1836.

My very dear John,—I received your little letter per cousin Betsy. I am not sorry to hear that you have so very little time to yourself, but I am sorry that you do not cultivate the little that you have to better advantage. I hope you find time to read the Word of God so as to profit by it, that is to say, to read it as if the Holy Spirit dictated every word of it *for you*, just as if there were not another human being but yourself on the face of the earth. One thing is certain that unless you acquiesce with that command, 'My son gave me thine heart,' all other doings will go for nothing.

I beseech you to remember that where there is a will there is a way. God is ever ready to give strength, time, and opportunity, to all his children. I can say that he is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. Tell William when you see him that I often pray for you both.

But if God gives my request it will neither be for your sakes nor for mine, but for the sake of Jesus Christ, who alone is the way, the truth, and the life. That we may all meet at last in His presence is the constant desire of your loving mother, A. RENTON.

6. *To the same.*

Writing shortly after, she says—

"The secret of our happiness is *love*, first to God our Saviour, and then to our neighbour. I do not think there is any likelihood of my being in London this year. I have much to do and short time to do it. You will say 'so has every body.' Yes, the young may die, but the old must. I wish to be ready and waiting for my change."

7. *To her daughter Mrs. Robson.*

Edinburgh, 27th January 1849.

I am glad that the M.'s are fixed. I trust they will go forward with one object in view, and not turn to the right hand or to the left. If they are not rich in money they have a large measure of what the angels extolled in their

song—peace and good-will. Perhaps there is not a family has a larger share of the pure good-will of hearts that are opened by God's love, and yet infinite wisdom keeps them as they are. What we know not now we shall know in heaven. I am glad you told me of the Communion—my spirit will be with you.

8. *To the same.*

Edinburgh, May 30, 1850.

Mrs. Grierson's household furniture is selling to-day. Your father and I were married shortly after her. We feel the admonition. Our's would just have to go in the same way. But it is cheering to know that we have "a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens" ready for our reception.

9. *To the same.*

Edinburgh, 16th December 1852.

Our dear Agnes is no better. She is more incoherent, but the fever is no higher. I have no hope for recovery but in the living God. He alone can heal her. I trust we shall all be prepared for any issue. I am satisfied that for her to live is Christ and to die is gain.

10. *To the same.*

Edinburgh, 17th May 1853.

My very dear Agnes,—I am quite relieved by your letter of to-day announcing that the Doctor and you are so kind as to go to N. M. Tell your good dear husband and my factor[1] that I consider it the kindest honour as well as the greatest they could confer to accept my little bower for their summer quarters. I hope that the fine air, the cow, and the fishing will make up for all other deficiencies. I cannot tell you how pleased I am to-night. Oh that I could give the Author of all my mercies the praise that is due for His wondrous kindness to me. What am I that the Lord has so often given me my heart's desire? If you let me know the day you intend to be at New Mills, I will go out and meet you at the station.

11. *To the same.*

Edinburgh 30th August 1853.

It was our Communion on Sabbath, and a day of deep gratitude and high exultation to me. John came with me of his own accord. He sat

[1] A jocular name of her grandson William.

next me, and handed me the memorials of that body and blood by which we were both saved. How sweet! What am I that the Lord has dealt so bountifully with me? I am very thankful that Agnes, Grant, and Maggie have joined themselves to the Lord. But John is the first[1] that has sat down with me at the Supper. It was a feast indeed. It surpassed all that I have enjoyed during my pilgrimage. "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

12. *To the same.*

"Edinburgh, 29th March 1854.

I feel very much better, but not getting on as I hoped to do. However, I am aware that an old woman like me cannot expect to get strong. I am sure that I have more reason for gratitude than many on this score, and I do desire to say "Amen" to whatever the will of the Lord may be.

Dr. Brown called yesterday. He told us that Sir G. Sinclair invited himself to breakfast with him, and that he had brought together a dozen of ministers, U. P. and Free, to meet him. They had the union of the two bodies discussed,

[1] Of her grandchildren.

and were of one mind—Union, Union! Sir G. S. invited them all to his house to breakfast, and requested every one of them to bring an elder with him, and he would get some more to meet them next week. He is likewise to go to Glasgow, and to do all he can to set the union agoing there. Dr. B. is in high spirits about it. Good old man, I wish he may live to see it realized. Henry came to-day, and is in high feather about the news of the Bill. He appears ready and willing to take the field against th e whole host.

13. *To the same.*

Edinburgh, 13th May 1854.

I enclose a letter I had from Miss R. I went to W. L. on Tuesday, and examined as far as I could her scholars. I think she is a complete teacher of English in all its branches, likewise of writing. She is deficient in arithmetic, but she never gave herself out for teaching it. The needlework was good, crochet, etc. She has been quite too refined for the place. You may fancy what she has had to do, when I tell you that the children were in the habit of using their fingers for their noses. But the most of the mothers complained "that it was all freaks."

Notwithstanding, they gave Miss R. great praise. I told Mr. J. that they would be better off that came after her, as she had broken up the fallow ground. I advised her to issue an advertisement, and to use my name as a reference for Edinburgh and yours for Glasgow. Should you be applied to you will get her testimonials.

14. *To her son John Thomson, in London.*

Edinburgh, 25th December 1854.

My dear John,—We are glad to see by your and James's letters that baby is in life, although from the accounts my hopes are very small of his recovery. God is all-sufficient. When He says, "Live," we live; when He says, "Die," we die. I have resigned him to his Father and our Father, to your God and my God. He knows what will be most for the child's good and His own glory. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever. If he is taken away without encountering the storms of this life we ought to be silent: "Be still, and know that I am God." I am still, for I have no more doubt of his salvation than I have of my own. I have fled to Christ with all that pertain to me, and I believe I will meet

all in glory, unless they reject Christ and will not have His salvation, and *that* our dear baby cannot do. I will wait in hope for whatever is the will of our God and Saviour. I feel more than I can tell for your dear wife. None knows but a mother what it is to be a mother. As suffering with you all, thine affectionate mother,

A. R.

15. *To the same, and her daughter-in-law.*

Edinburgh, 27th December 1854.

My dear Elizabeth and John,—I deeply feel with you and for you. I never knew that I was a parent until I saw my first William dead. From that time I have felt that I had part of myself in the grave, and could say to the worm, "thou art my sister." What cause of deep humiliation, and for our earnest desire to have Christ formed in each of our children the hope of glory! I earnestly hope that the Lord will spare all the rest of the dear ones to you. We require to be quiet under the afflicting hand. If we are not He sometimes sends us another trial, that we may see that our children are not our own, and that He has a right to take them all if He pleases.

Willie is as merry as a lark. It does make me sorry, and yet I am glad to see him in health and spirits. He is very much attached to Henry and Agnes Robson, and I think they will be of use to him. He is likewise quite at home at Newington House, but prefers Tilla to Charles. Poor young dears! It is well they cannot enter into our cares, for if they did they would not grow in mind nor body. All God's ways are *perfect*.

I am sorry to tell you that ——'s husband died yesterday morning. I have not heard the particulars—indeed I never heard that he was ill. Poor woman, she is left with eight children! When we look round we see others more tried than we are. I think our dear James will not be down, now that he has been detained. Give him my love, and receive the same for yourselves and all the dear loved ones. As present in spirit, your affectionate mother, A. R.

16. *To her granddaughter at Birkenhead.*

Edinburgh, 6th December 1855.

My dear Agnes,—My patience is more than exhausted. I would have believed that my letter had not reached you, but your uncle Wil-

liam told me you had got it, and had not time to write that Saturday, but that you would see Mrs. C. and write the next. This you have not done. I am very sorry, particularly on Maggie's account. It was no favour that I asked. It was a duty to your relations. I cannot understand if she asked Miss L. to send some one with you and her, or to let you go yourselves, how she could refuse, and if she did she ought to have written me to that effect. I am so sorry to see so little heart about you as not to find time to visit a dying relative. What are the practical results that your dear father's illness and begun recovery have had upon you, if you would not take the trouble to reach a cup of cold water to one in similar affliction, with the bitter ingredient of poverty added thereto? I cannot see any answer that either of you can give to this question.

Mrs. Robson has been paying me a visit. I am glad to say that our Glasgow friends are well. I have seen two letters from John. He is very well pleased that he has gone abroad; he is doing a great amount of work, and he has time to write long letters. Where there is a will there is always a way.

I had a letter some time since from your uncle

James, asking my permission for your going to London during the holidays. I hope that wherever you go you will be enabled to remember that God's eyes are on the just, and His ear is ever open to their cry. That both of you may seek God and serve Him with your whole heart is the earnest prayer of your affectionate grandmother, A. R.

17. *To her daughter, Mrs. Robson.*

Edinburgh, 14th December 1855.

After a pressing invitation to her grandchildren to spend the Christmas season with her, she says—

"I have made up my mind neither to go out, nor to ask in visitors, during the holidays. I prefer to be alone, except with my dear relations, who are always welcome."

After referring to some pecuniary arrangement, she adds—

"What is money? Nothing, but in as far as we are good stewards. I never look forward, and I can hardly look back on my stewardship. I just do daily work as I get daily bread, and I am helped; hence my heart doth joy exceedingly."

18. *To the same.*

Edinburgh, January 30, 1856.

As I did not get to see you last week, I will not think of leaving home for some time. February has been the most important of all the months of the year to me. Its curtain appears to be drawing closer around me in many respects than it has ever done—not of sorrow, but of solemnity. I feel quite pleased to be alone. But if you could make it convenient to come for a day or two, either on the 9th or 16th, you could do me a good service by reading letters, etc.

19. *To the same.*

Edinburgh, 7th March 1856.

I have been so much taken up since I returned that I have only written one letter—an answer to one I had from Miss Griffith. I had a delightful quiet season of self-examination on my journeying home. I had the compartment to myself all the way.

Mrs. B. and her children were before me. I was taken up making calls with her on Wednesday—and, what do you think, I met Mrs.

M'Crie, one of the ladies who first formed the Anti-Slavery Society! I told her that our meeting was to be next day. She called and went with me. It was a full meeting, and the different views were spoken to on both sides. Mrs. M'L. was there and made a very pretty speech. But when the votes were taken there were only Mrs. P., Miss S., and myself in the minority; so we all rose and left the room. Mrs. M'C. and her sister left with us, five in all. I am thankful I was enabled to withstand so much fine speaking. But it was all to gloss over the —— party. I am glad that Miss G. was not in Edinburgh, for they seem to think that she was at the bottom of all this, which she is not. I love the committee that I have left, but I mourn over their blindness, in crying "Peace, Peace," when there can be no peace with the enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ. They argued that we ought to "forgive until seventy times seven." I said that referred to personal injuries, but that our Lord pronounced those who opposed and perverted the truth "a generation of vipers that could not escape," etc., and that neither could the —— party unless they repent. I hope my dear Dr. R. will keep his post at the meeting of his committee on Mon-

day night. As an under-shepherd he must have his rod in his hand, to ward off the sheep from unsafe ground, as well as to keep them on the green pastures."

20. *To the same.*

6th February 1857.

Referring to some circumstances connected with her husband's death, she says—

"The ninth is the day never to be thought of but with painful regret. I must be dumb on a subject that there is so little light and so much darkness connected with. The only consolation we have is that he was ready for his change. The lesson to me is, 'Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.'"

21. *To her son Henry, on arriving at Liverpool after a long absence.*

Edinburgh, 13th June 1856.

After a variety of details evincing her activity and interest in all arrangements, she adds—

"I wrote M. this day from Kelso. I have returned because there was nothing for me to do

until the general cleaning was over. I intend returning on Monday to put all to rights for you.

"I had a very sweet visit to London, and saw all my old friends as well as my new ones. . . . Every one was kinder to me than another. Oh! what cause I had to be thankful for the health I enjoyed; everything went on to a wish, and I left them all in health. It is for me to bless the Lord."

22. *To the same.*

Edinburgh, 28th October 1856.

I am sorry that you are to delay leaving till the second week in November. As to my expenses, had I gone with you I intended to bear the half, that is, dividing Maggie's betwixt us. But from what I learn you have decided to go by sea. That settles my mind *not* to go. You don't require me, and it is only giving up a luxury I can do without. I will be as happy at home as I could be abroad. Our enjoyments are not limited to place nor friends. But I beg of you to consider that you may be exposed to storms at sea, and should they produce sea-sickness I would fear for the recurrence of the complaint you are seeking to cure. I intended to

come out on Saturday first, but if you do not go away for another week I will not come till the next. With love all alive for your direction, comfort, and blessing in all your movements. Your affectionate mother, A. R.

23. *To the same.*

Edinburgh, 21st August, 1857.

I write to say that your old friend Mr. G. G. Cunningham intends, if he is not obliged to leave this to-morrow, to go to Kelso at 4 o'clock and spend Sabbath with you. I told him that he must preach for you. I am glad to say that he has never given up preaching the Gospel. I was much delighted with him last night. I had my bonnet on going out to see Peggie B——, a poor woman that is thought dying. She sent for me. Mr. C. offered to go with me, which he did. It looked like an angel's visit to her. He so sweetly and so clearly presented Christ our Saviour, whom she extolled as her Lord, "that had redeemed her, and kept her all along, and would *not let her go* now."

24. *To the same.*

Edinburgh, 11th December 1857.

Referring to two venerable Christians in Philadelphia, she says—

"I would like to see Dr. Coleman's father and mother, but that cannot be. If they be of the sheep who know the good shepherd and are known of him, we shall meet to go no more out, with the number that no man can number, out of every nation and kindred, and people and tongue, to be ever with the Lord."

25. *To her daughter, Mrs. Robson.*

A letter of 31st December 1857 concludes—

"Farewell to 1857. That the Lord may give us all grace to love and work, and to work and love, better than ever we have done, is the prayer of your affectionate mother."

26. *To her son at Kelso.*

15th July 1858.

Referring to the dangerous illness of a pious man brought on by mistaken and excessive fasting, she says—

"He had told me he was keeping fasts. But I told him he was entirely wrong, for this was a time to rejoice. God was pouring out his Spirit, and although it was not on all flesh it was on part, therefore all the Lord's redeemed ought to bless and praise His holy name. I pray the Lord to direct and bless the means for his recovery. Yet I fear he will die, and cannot help mourning both for himself and friends, and for the handle to the ungodly who called him religious over much."

25. *To the same.*[1]

Edinburgh, 14th March 1860.

My very dear Henry,—I write to tell you that your dear brother William returned safe from Lyons this forenoon. His neck is almost quite well. He had a pleasant visit to London on his way back. Duncan dined with him on Saturday. He spent Sabbath with James Hall. John dined with him on Monday and Tuesday, and he has such sweet tidings of them all: Elizabeth is working with Mrs. Bailie, John is

[1] The last received written by herself. To many later, written to her dictation, her signature only was attached—to some even it was wanting.

taking an active part in the good cause, Duncan is going forward in vigorous style. *Bless the Lord, O my soul.* I cannot tell what I feel of gratitude that the Lord hath done such great things for me and mine. I have had much to thank and praise God for of late. Indeed, except the sorrow and detestation I have felt at ——'s becoming a lawyer, I may say my life of late has been a life of praise. My friends that have died, absent from the body, are all gone to be present with the Lord. I do not feel at liberty to speak about our dear —— for I am not sure if he is consolidated yet, but a short time will make it plain.

Frederick Douglas is to be in Glasgow on the 20th. He has been invited to Dalkeith. If you wish him, his address is at Dr. Croft's, Halifax. If you write him say that I hope he will rest a few days with me. I have much to speak to him about. He wrote to see if we could get a passport for him to go to Paris. The American consul will not acknowledge him as a citizen. The Bazaar at Halifax last week has been a success. It drew £300. So they will send nothing to America this year for the Anti-Slavery cause but money. W. has just come in, and says his brothers in London will get a foreign

passport for Mr. Douglas. Will you write him so? Love to the cousins and your own dear self.—In affection,

AGNES RENTON.

26. *To the same.*[1]

28th October 1860.

My beloved Henry,—I have been deeply affected with the news from Kelso. I have never

[1] To understand this letter some explanation is required, and though involving intrusion of what is personal, may perhaps be excused. At a full meeting of Elders and Deacons sentiments had been expressed by some, and a conclusion had been adopted by a majority, which greatly astonished and distressed me, indicating on the part of those who should uphold order, and should "look that we lose not the things which we have wrought," a disposition to succumb to a little noisy and niggardly faction that had arisen, and to secede from a step of propriety and progress, in which I had no part, but which had, at a meeting of the Congregation, been regularly and constitutionally adopted by a large majority. And I felt that if, before an unworthy and discreditable opposition, order, honour, and progress were to be surrendered by those who should be their guardians and promoters, and this notwithstanding of my remonstrance, my teaching and ruling influence as a minister were subverted, and I should no longer wish or consent to retain the office where it was so. Disclosing my mind to no one but my younger

been satisfied with the congregation. From the first I thought there was something awanting, but I never could have believed there would have been a majority of the Session differing from you in sentiment, either about things spiritual or temporal. I give you my advice, as your experienced old mother, to look neither to the right nor to the left, but to go up to your watch-tower and join us who are praying earnestly for divine direction to you. I have no set petition, no special request to make to God, but for direction. May you be enabled to put your entire case into His hand, and let Him decide what will be most for His glory and their good.

You have been *comparatively* too faithful a minister to them, and they have not appreciated your labours. Maggie and I commence this night our prayers on your account, and trust you will be enabled to look steadfastly to "the Rock that is higher than you." My entire con-

daughter, then alone with me, she wrote her sister, then with her grandmamma. The above letter came to me by return of post, bringing with it no small refreshment and encouragement, although my own mind had become clear and decided as to the course to be followed, and on the Wednesday, when the crisis arrived, all mischief was defeated, and danger and faction vanished.

fidence is in Jesus Christ our God and Saviour. He will shew us that we have not trusted in Him in vain. I have no feeling against the people, but only pity them. My heart's desire and prayer to God is that the Holy Spirit may be poured out on them all. I write to-night to our tried friend Mrs. Macnab, to join us in special prayer all next week. She may mention it to Mrs. and Dr. Robson. But I wish no others to know of it besides your brother William. We shall hear from Dr. Somerville what they do on Wednesday. Perhaps we have all along asked too little for your congregation, and we must make our requests *large* for you and for them, looking above their petty worldliness to the great consolation which comes from the Father of lights to all his spiritual children. I have already an assurance that I will be answered on your behalf, and that you will rejoice more in the Lord than you have ever done. I will leave the matter with Him who is *all-sufficient*, and that all-sufficiency before your mind will enable you to say "not my will but Thine be done."

When Mr. D. was much harassed and tried by some members of his session, two rich members told me they were going away, and I said "go, and let every one that is of your

spirit go, and if *ten* righteous remain who are true to the cause, we will prosper and be better without you." The two troublesome elders were expelled, and lately all has been going on well, with peace, comfort, and an increasing blessing. Tell my dear Aggie to keep up her spirits, that greater is He that is with us than all that *can* be against us.

I am, with all affection, your loving mother,

A. R.

Posthumous Letters.

The two following Letters were found among her confidential papers, enclosed under one envelope, addressed as follows :—

To the Sons and Daughters of Agnes Renton.

Not to be opened till after her death.

4th April 1855.

POSTHUMOUS LETTERS.

To the Children of Agnes Renton.

Parlour, Feb. 19, 1829,
Edinburgh, 15 Buccleugh Place.

My dear Children,—Seek the Lord for your portion. Your mother has had but one request to God for all of you since you came into existence, during her life, and at her death; and that is, that every one of you might be born again, and your life hid with Christ in God.

Pray always and never faint. Let no sun rise or set without entering, at least twice a day, into your closet and pouring out your heart to God.

Think much upon the requests which you have made to *Him*, remembering that His eye is on the just and His ear open to their cry.

In all your transactions with the children of God, or with the children of the world, let the

rule of Christ be your rule,—"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Never think of marrying any person, whatever qualities they may be possessed of, unless you believe them to be Christians in deed and in truth. How could you spend your precious time with a person whom you had no hopes of spending Eternity with?

Keep the scales of your conscience clean. Weigh well every action, always giving the cast to what you think will be most for the glory of God, without regarding the displeasure of your relations or the approbation of your friends, remembering the first commandment of the Lord thy God, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

"I have no money to leave you.[1] . . But should any money or property ever be left me, I bequeath it to you, my daughters and sons, in equal portions, after deducting from the whole value one-tenth, to be given to the *Lord*, either for the spread of His gospel, or to His poor, as you may agree upon.

I request that if any of you should meet with

[1] Here are some details about debts, with a subsequent marking that they are all discharged.

any of my writings or papers, that may have been omitted by me to be destroyed, you will keep them out of public view, as I am conscious that nothing I have ever written should come to the public.

If you, my children, have any wish to praise your mother, as is too much the case with bereaved relatives, never do it in words. If you would have wished me to have lived longer with you, let all that you approved of in my character live in you in *a seven-fold degree.* By so doing, death will be great gain to all concerned. My soul is freed from sin and clothed with the garments of praise. My body will rest with the dead that died in the Lord. All of me that can be of any use either to the church of Christ or to the world will live in you [may it be] in a seventy-fold degree. Only my sin is dead, and the ashes of all my imperfections.

O, my dear, dear children, see that you have entered in by the door into the sheep fold. Keep close by the pastures of revelation. Rest not by any stream until you have got full assurance. Your mother never had joy and peace until she obtained *it.* God maketh the offer. What hindereth you from accepting all the privileges of his children ?

Fight the good fight of faith. Walk in love. Seek peace and ensue it. And may the God of all grace support you by His Holy Spirit throughout all your journeyings, and at last receive every one of your several spirits to join the redeemed in the upper sanctuary, who are casting their crowns at the feet of Jesus, and vying with each other in hallelujahs to Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own BLOOD, to whom be glory, and honour, and eternal praise for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

Peter, Henry, Agnes, Isabella, Christina, William, John, Thomas, Alexander, James—Disappoint not the Spirit and the Bride that invite you to come—disappoint not the first wish and the last wish of

Your affectionate Mother,

AGNES RENTON.

Edinburgh, 4th April 1855.

My dear Children,—It is now twenty-six years since I wrote you in the view of my death. The letter I then wrote I leave with my testimony, as a believer in Christ my Saviour, that in keeping his commandments there is a great reward. The throne of grace has been my

greatest privilege, the Advocate within the veil my joy and wonder. To be permitted to breathe in the atmosphere of a reconciled God, lisping out Abba Father, has absorbed every idea of my mind in *love*, sweetened every trial, made every burden light, and drawn my heart and my flesh out to pant after the living God, ever constraining me to devote the thoughts of my heart, the words of my mouth, and the every action of my life to Him that loved me and washed me from my sins in His blood, and who, by the time you have received this, will have admitted me into the kingdom of glory to be for ever with the Lord. Fare-ye-well. The first wish of my heart for you all is also the last wish of your departed mother,

AGNES RENTON.

Having for many years lamented the mistaken custom of putting on mournings as an external badge of sorrow of heart; and believing as I do that a majority of those who put on the deepest mourning have the lightest hearts; likewise that many in the middle and poorer classes suffer from this fashion much privation, and their children often starvation, before they get the debts paid which they had to incur for family mourn-

ings :—I therefore request that none of my family will put on any mournings at my death, and likewise that they will give the reason, that it may be known, with the notification of my death in the newspapers.[1]—A. R.

1 This request, dictated by motives worthy of her independent, disinterested, and benevolent mind, and weighty as received among her written and dying instructions, her family were precluded from considering as a practical question, being all at the time of her decease in deep mourning for her son Alexander, who had died a short while before, and for whom, though she was unable to wear them, she had ordered a full set of mournings for herself—whether from change or forgetfulness of an opinion she often expressed, or from some other motive, is not known.

An Account

of the

Life and Death of Rachel Renton.

AN ACCOUNT

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Life and Death of Rachel Renton.

RACHEL was born May 16, 1808. She had naturally a strong and vigorous constitution, with a cheerful temper, and a remarkable vivacity; and she attracted the notice of her friends and of visitors in the family more than any of her brothers and sisters. Soon after her first dawnings of reason began to appear, and even before she could speak plainly, she shewed great seriousness when anything connected with religion was the subject of conversation. When about two years old she was one day rather late of coming in to dinner. Her father had asked the blessing before she entered the dining-room. On being seated, she looked round, and seeing the family begin to eat, she cried out, "Father, you have not said, The Lord—you have not said The Lord yet." I thought for a moment what the

child could mean, and then recollected that she had not been present when the blessing was asked. I was pleased with her infantile expression, which shewed her observation and reflection; and having explained the matter to her, said, "My dear Rachel, I hope you will always be a good child and seek God's blessing."

She was naturally high spirited, and would cry bitterly if any of her toys were taken from her, or if any of her sisters or brothers differed with her. But if her father or I had occasion to correct her, she neither cried nor sought to escape, but, as it were, consented to her own chastisement, though once at least she must have suffered a considerable degree of pain. On that occasion I whipped her sorely for disobedience. She was in the habit of going to a back green to amuse herself with a neighbour's children, but under restrictions not to leave the green. The breaking of this rule was her disobedience, and whether that occurred from thoughtlessness or from love to her little companions who left the green, I could not learn, for she never ventured to make any excuse; but when charged with her fault and told of the punishment, submitted with a willingness highly exemplary to me her parent. She went early to school, and during nine months

that she attended it her progress was very considerable, which was to be ascribed to her diligence, for she took much pleasure in learning the little words; and when she could put them together so as to understand them, she never tired of application, but would sit down and read a little book from beginning to end without either being attracted or disturbed by the amusements that were going on around her. At school she was much praised by her teacher for diligence and for veracity. Nothing was ever known to draw her aside from the truth. No threatening and no gift from her school-companions could tempt her to deviate from *it*. If any quarrel took place amongst them, or any transgression of the rules of the school, of which she had been a witness, her master would refer to little Rachel for the authentic account of the whole matter. Thus, although amongst the youngest of a numerous school, she was held in the highest estimation by her teacher, and she taught by her example the inestimable value of truth.

Before she was five years old she was affected with a swelling in the glands of the neck, and although for some time it did not prevent her attending school, it made gradual inroads on her

general health. She had just completed her fifth year when she was sent to sea-bathing away from all her relations, but she made no complaint on that account. When I went to see her I inquired how she liked to be alone with the servant. She replied, "I like home best, but if it will do my neck good, I will stop here." We had soon to bring her home, for the sea-bathing rather increased the swelling. One day after her return she asked me "if big people prayed." "Yes, my dear," said I, "big people go into their closets and pray by themselves, but children pray in the hearing of their parents or guardians that they may know they do pray, and that their prayers are spoken in a solemn and correct manner. But what makes you think we do not pray?" "For Mary," said she, "never prays any." Mary was the servant who had the charge of her when at sea-bathing. "But are you sure she never went by herself?" "I am quite sure, mother, for at night when we went to bed she undressed me and then herself, and she saw me pray, but I never saw her pray, and in the morning the same. She never left me, I saw her all the day, she never prayed." I was surprised at the information and sorry to hear it. I told Mary what Rachel had observed.

She seemed ashamed, acknowledged it was too true, and exclaimed, "Could anybody have thought that such a child could have noticed *that!*" Here I cannot help noticing Rachel's thoughtfulness and modesty, for she did not venture to reprove Mary herself, or to judge her till she had information, but inquired about the sin, and left the reproof to her mother. She gave many good advices to her brothers and sisters in a simple and striking way, of which I will mention an instance. One Sabbath, observing them engaged in play, she said, "You are breaking the Sabbath. That is a great sin, and God marks down all your sins in His book. Oh, pray, pray for him to rub them all out." When amusing a younger sister one day with some shells, the child swallowed one. Little Rachel was inconsolable. She wept bitterly. When I endeavoured to quiet her, she answered, "If my sister dies, it is me that killed her, and I must be executed." It was with the greatest difficulty I could persuade her of her innocence; and I mention the incident to shew you how far she was from any idea of evasion or of excusing herself where she knew or thought herself to be in the wrong.

As her health began to decline, she grew tall

and improved much in her appearance; and it was truly affecting to look upon her apparently in the full bloom of health, but with this tumour increasing on her neck, which baffled all medical skill. Many experiments were made, but all without effect. A great quantity of medicine was given her, and she always took cheerfully whatever the doctors prescribed, and cheerfully submitted to the external applications, however painful. But when it was proposed to cut off the tumour she was greatly alarmed. As soon as the doctors had left the room, she said, "Mother, I heard them saying that nothing could be done excepting to cut it off. But I would much rather die than have it cut off, for I know I could not stand it."

As her weakness increased, she increased more and more in piety and patience. During her long confinement I never heard her utter a complaint. When asked how she was, she always answered with a smile, "I am no better." Never until the day before her death did I hear her say that she was worse. Nothing seemed to give her any uneasiness but noise, and she would not allow her brothers and sisters to play in the same room with her, but was always happy to hear them learn their lessons beside her. I had

occasion one day to correct her eldest brother in her presence. He had been refractory, and said he did not care for me. Rachel, in a most serious manner said to him, "Peter, do you love God?" "Yes," he replied. "Then God himself says you are a liar. For His word says, 'He that loveth not his brother (or mother) whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Peter left the room without saying a word, and I wondered at the solemn and pointed reproof. After she became unable to walk, she was for three months confined to an arm-chair, and during that time she complained of languor and weakness throughout all her frame, saying often in the sweetest manner, "Oh, I am wearied! oh, I am tired!" She was then seldom able to read; but as she had always shewn a great partiality for books, her father supplied her with several juvenile books, among which was Watt's Hymns, a great favourite. When these were read to her, she would say, "I like them very well, but just read me another chapter of the *Bible*." As I read the greater part of my spare time to her, I always selected such books as I thought both instructive and entertaining. But she never spoke of getting any good or any comfort from any book but the

Bible. She was very fond of the Paraphrases, and often repeated those on 1 Thess. iv. 13, and on Job i. 21. She could converse with great comprehension on the fall of man, the way of salvation, and on death. But when we adverted to her own dissolution she would shut her eyes, and a tear would slip down her cheek, which was too affecting for a parent to proceed. I sometimes thought I would like to know whether it was the dread of dissolution, or the thought of parting with us, to whom she was so much attached, that affected her. But her father prevented me asking her, saying it was too tender a question.

We often asked her if she thought she would get better, but her uniform answer was, "I do not know." One day when her brothers and sisters were in the room with her, she looked round on them, saying, "If God pleases He can make me well again, and the stoutest of you all."

She often spoke of her brother who died when he was two years old, and made many inquiries about him. One of her questions was —"If now he would know as much as good people did who were old when they died?" I heard her say one day to a younger sister, "William is happy, happy in heaven. He has

a white robe on, and the palm of victory in his hand. He is as big now as the biggest man is when he dies, and he knows more than the wisest man on earth knows." A lady called one day to see her, and expressed sorrow to find her so distressed, and spoke of how little we could trust to health. "Very little, indeed," said Rachel, "for William and I were the two stoutest of the family."

The tumour on her neck got so large, and pressed so much on the windpipe, that it was with great difficulty she could lie in bed, and many a long night she was not in bed at all, but sat in her arm-chair. When her father or I insisted on sitting by her, or that she would allow any other person to sit up with her, she replied in the most pleasant manner, "I cannot think of any person sitting up with me; just carry me to your bedside, and the chair will be my bed." It was very moving to a parent's feelings to look upon that afflicted child sitting so calmly and resignedly by the bedside at midnight, when all was quiet, and the whole family besides enjoying rest, and only the glimmering of the fire-light in the room to cheer her, for we thought the candle consumed the air and affected her breathing. Surely no education, nor religion, but that of the

meek and lowly Jesus could have so supported a suffering child in such peculiarly distressing circumstances. But the Lord, who is sovereign in all his doings, was pleased to afflict her more heavily. A general dropsy ensued, which, together with the increasing tumour in her neck, rendered her condition most afflicting, and for four weeks her sufferings were great. At length symptoms of mortification appeared, after which she survived thirty-nine hours. During that period her looks and cries were such as no language of mine can describe, for darkness of mind seemed to accompany violent pain of body. It was about six in the morning of the day previous to her death that the inflammation took place. The severe pain made her whole frame tremble and shake. She cried out for the first time, "I am a great deal worse now; oh, I am ill; I am dying; send for the doctor to see if he can give me any relief; oh, father, do you think I will live till the doctor comes? see how I am shaking." When the doctor came, she said, "I am very ill, doctor; can you give me any relief?" He replied, "I am indeed very sorry to see you so ill; what do you feel?" "I am all breaking in pieces. My back is cutting in two. Can you give me anything to heal me?" "I will

go and bring a bottle that I hope will do you some good." It was some time before he returned with the bottle, and gave her two teaspoonfuls, which she took eagerly. She then asked, "What part is this to heal?" "Your back," he replied. "But I am all breaking in pieces; can you give me nothing more?" "I will go," said he, "and bring another bottle to rub you with, that will perhaps give you some relief." She added, "Do you think, doctor, I can live till night? When you come back, oh, stay with me all day!" Her father prayed with her, and she held up her trembling swelled hand in token of reverence, and endeavoured to be composed. But the dropsy increased to such a size over all her body, that it was impossible to support her any other way than by a person sitting on each side of her, and allowing the bones of her elbows to rest upon the hollows of their hands. This was the position in which she was, sitting on a sofa, with her grandmother supporting the one arm and I the other, when the doctor returned at three o'clock. She looked very earnestly at him, but did not speak. I told him that several blue spots had appeared on her limbs, and that I was afraid they would burst. He said he expected the blue spots, but that the

limbs would not burst—and went away. He had just gone, when Rachel looked round to me, saying, "Oh, mother, help me, oh, help me! Can you not give me any relief?" I was much overcome, and, with a breaking heart, replied, "My dear child, I cannot help you; none but the Lord that made you can give you any relief." She eagerly replied, "What will I say to Him?" "Just pray to Him to send you relief, or strengthen you to bear your trouble." She immediately lifted up her eyes, crying, "Oh, Lord, send me some relief, or strengthen me to bear my trouble." She spoke none from that time until four o'clock, when her father came into the room, and she at once said, "Father, pray," —a request which he immediately complied with, praying for several minutes. So soon as he had finished, Rachel joyfully exclaimed, "Father, I am going to leave you, and I am glad I am going to see my Lord in heaven, and I will see my little William there. Mother, I am going to leave you. Grandmother, farewell. Oh, tell all my sisters and brothers to come to me, that I may see them and bid them farewell." Her father went and brought them into the room. But they were all so much affected, and wept so much aloud, that I was afraid the scene and

noise would disturb her, and begged of them to be quiet, but without effect. However Rachel was no way agitated; she was calm with a heavenly composure, and shook hands with all of them, bidding them farewell one by one. Her younger brother was so much affected that he could not come forward. I observed to her that Henry stood at the end of the sofa. She immediately held out her swelled hand to him, saying, "Henry, I am going to leave you. Oh, pray God to give you a new heart." Her youngest sister, an infant in the servant's arms, was last brought to her. She did not bid her farewell, but, taking her by the hand, and looking around, said, "Father, you must pray with me for Christina." Then she added, "Perhaps God may spare me to see another day with you all; but it will be as well to send for grandfather, for I would like to see him, and bid him farewell." We sent for him. She inquired several times if he was come, but by the time he arrived, she was much worse, and was only able to say, "I am going." He replied, "Where are you going?" But she was so low and her breathing so laborious, that her answer could not be heard. He offered to pray with her, to which she signified assent; and

while he was engaged, she seemed to restrain herself to listen and join in the prayer. A little while after this, an intimate friend came into the room, who had called in the morning, and had witnessed then her solicitations to the doctor for relief. When Rachel noticed her, she held out her hand, saying, "Mrs. Sinclair, I am going to heaven, farewell." Mrs. S. was very much agitated and overcome. I said in a low voice to her, "I am surprised to see you so much affected, when such a desirable change has taken place." She answered, "It is the greatness of the change that overcomes me; to think when I saw her in the morning she was urgently begging for help and preservation, and now so serene and happy to tell she is about to leave us and go to heaven: infants perfect His praise." A little after this she proposed if her father would try to lift her off the sofa, and carry her to bed, she would try to lie down. No person in the house could carry her but he, for she was so heavy and so big with the great swelling. When he lifted her up, she put her arms round his neck, and her head lay on his shoulder. I followed with the light. When on the stair to the bed-room, she fastened her eyes on me, and with perfect composure said, "Mother, my

father is carrying me up to lay me on my dead bed." I could make no answer, but gazed on the benignity of her countenance. When laid down, she fell upon a soft slumber. As I was not very well and much fatigued, I lay down on another bed in the same room, and her father and grandmother sat by her bedside. A little past twelve o'clock I heard her say, "Where is my mother?" Grandmother replied, "She has lain down a little, for she is not very well." I hastily rose up, and took her by the hand. She said, "Mother, I am sorry for disturbing you, but the angels are come, and I thought I would like you to see them." Pointing with her finger to the corner of the room, she earnestly said, "Do you see that angel over there! Look how he is shining. I will surely be going away soon now. Oh, father, pray!" He did so for a few minutes. She then exultingly exclaimed, "Oh, I am happy! oh, I am glad! feel, my pulse is stopped." Her lip quivered, and she took what is called a patient of death. When she came out of it, she put her hand upon her breast, saying, "Sorrow is returned, and the angels are away. I will not be going yet. You had better go to your bed again." She continued very distressed and restless, but enjoying perfect

peace of mind. At one time she cried out, "Oh, Lord, send an angel from the New Jerusalem to take me to Thyself, or strengthen me to bear my trouble." When the morning began to dawn, she inquired "if that was daylight." On being told it was, she lifted up her pale hands and eyes, and prayed, saying, "I thank thee, oh, Lord, for keeping me through this night. Oh, strengthen me to wait Thy time. Oh, Lord, bless my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all the rest of my other friends. Amen." Then turning her eyes to me she said, "Mother, you will see me lying to-morrow morning a dead corpse." My thoughts were so absorbed in amazement at my own child, or rather at the power of divine grace in her, that I was unable to make any reply; her father was equally unable, and, indeed, during the preceding night, he had been able to speak very little. Some time after this, she fell into a slumbering state. When she awoke, she seemed to have a severe struggle, and her lip frequently quivered, but she made no complaint. At one o'clock, afternoon, she said, "Mother, do you not see the angels? they are here." I did not like to say I did not see them, and asked, "Are they here?" "They are there," she replied, pointing with her finger to

the wall in front of her bed. "See," said she, "the light shining. Is my father in the house?" I told her he had just gone out. "Then send for him to the shop, for I think I will soon be going away, and I would like him to pray with me before I go." She asked repeatedly if he was come, and when he came she said, "Father, the angels are come back, and you must pray with me before I go away. Tell all my brothers and sisters to come up that I may see them, and bid them farewell again." During the time he prayed, I held her by the hand. She smiled as I looked upon her, and her face gleamed with delight. When the prayer was ended she bade us individually farewell again, and seemed impatient to be gone. She then lifted up her eyes and prayed, saying, "Oh, Lord, take me to Thyself, or tell me when Thou wilt send for me." We were all silent for some minutes. She seemed to have received a direct answer to her prayer, for she looked round, saying, "I am not going yet; father, you may go to the shop again, I will be here when you come back." He only went to the other end of the room, for he could not leave a scene where his astonishment and feelings were equally engaged. In the course of the afternoon, she spoke very

little, sometimes saying, "The angels are here yet." During the evening, while her father and I were sitting by her bedside, she often repeated, "Mother, mother." When I inquired if she would take anything, or if I could do her any service, she held out her hands, and clasped me round the neck, holding me to her bosom for some time, but said nothing. This she did often both to her father and me. A little before nine o'clock, she became very restless; her father lifted her up, and laid her in a different position. Grandmother was sitting close by her bedside, and her father and I were sitting by the fire at a little distance, when she cried in a clear, full voice, "Father!" He instantly stepped over, and was taking her in his arms, when instead of putting her's round his neck, as she had done, she put them past him, saying, "It is *that* Father!" and in a few moments expired: her head fell lifeless on his shoulder, and when laid on the bed, she sobbed heavily for some minutes: it seemed as if the spirit was gone, but the animal functions could not so quickly cease.

Thus terminated a life of six years and nearly nine months, which had exhibited to us a picture of true Christian rectitude, and faith, and patience, and, above all, an astonishing manifesta-

tion of the grace and support of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of sinners, in her closing sufferings and death, which took place a few minutes past nine o'clock on Thursday evening, February 16, 1815.

APPENDIX.

A small volume was printed for private circulation, containing "Two Sermons preached to the United Presbyterian Congregation, Broughton Place, Edinburgh, on February 18, 1855, on occasion of the death of William Renton, Esq., their senior ruling Elder." The first was by the Rev. Peter Davidson, entitled, "The Contrast: or, Man Viewed by Sense and by Faith," from the text, Psalm cxliv. 3, 4—"Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man that thou makest account of him? Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away." The second was by John Brown, D.D., their senior minister, entitled "Assurance of Salvation, and How to Obtain it," from the text, 2 Timothy, i. 12—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day;" and "Dedicated to the Widow, Children, and Granchildren of his esteemed and beloved friend. the late William Renton, Esq., with cordial regard and sincere sympathy, by the Author." The following Sketch forms the close of the latter.

SKETCH OF

WILLIAM RENTON, ESQ.,

BY JOHN BROWN, D.D.

I NEED scarcely tell you, my friends, that in preparing and delivering this discourse, I have had a reference to the removal lately from the midst of us of some who gave good proof, both in life and death, that they had believed Christ and committed themselves to Him, and knowing Him, were persuaded that He was able to keep that which they had committed to Him; and specially to the sudden, though assuredly we cannot call it the untimely, removal of a most esteemed and beloved office-bearer of the church, who as an Elder has gone in and out before you for nearly half a century. I think the Presbyterian Church of Scotland has done right in looking, in all stages of her history, unapprovingly on the preaching of what are called

funeral sermons as a common practice. There are very weighty objections against it. But like most general rules this has its exceptions, and I should really feel as if I were not acting in accordance with the inspired precept, "Remember them which have the rule over you, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation," were I allowing the grave to close over WILLIAM RENTON, without endeavouring to obtain for myself, and assisting you to obtain for yourselves, some of the advantages we may derive from the remembrance of our departed father and friend. There was much about him well worth remembering. From the shrinking sensitiveness of his modest nature, I feel as if I were doing something he would scarcely have approved of, in speaking of him from this place at all. I can almost think I hear his gentle voice saying, "Do not speak of me—speak of Him whom I believed, and who *has* kept that which I committed to Him;" but I will take care, in the few remarks I feel it my duty to make, to express myself in carefully measured terms, and to ascribe all that was estimable and amiable in him to its true cause.

Mr. Renton was born in this city January 7, 1774. His father, a respectable manufacturer

of damask, died while he was a child; and he spent his early years under the roof of his paternal grandfather, a farmer in Lauderdale, an Elder of the parish of Channelkirk, esteemed for his integrity, good sense, and religion. By this dispensation, "the Father of the Fatherless" secured for him the many advantages of spending the first years of life under the healthy influences of the country; and beneath the benignant care of his grandfather he passed a blameless and happy boyhood. Divine grace seems very early to have marked him as one of its objects. When a very little boy, tending the cattle in the field, his mind was led to reflect deeply on the 23d Psalm, which he had committed to memory; and overcome with a sense of the desirableness of the state there described, he knelt down and earnestly besought the Lord that he would be *his* shepherd. What an abundant answer has that prayer found — what a still more abundant answer will yet be given to it!

At twelve years of age, by the advice of his relatives in Edinburgh, where his mother and two of her children continued to reside, he was sent to an apprenticeship in Leith; where he so pleased his master, that, on a relation inquiring how the boy was doing, he said, "I was to get

a boy, but I have got a man with a boy's body." On the close of his apprenticeship, he became clerk to a wine merchant in Leith, who died in a few months. The management of the whole concern devolved on his young assistant, then but eighteen years old, and so pleased were the heirs of his employer with his conduct, that they offered him the business and the stock at a very moderate security. He was induced, however, to decline the offer, for reasons which will be immediately adverted to; but I cannot but remark in passing, that the making of such an offer strikingly indicated how early he had manifested that trustworthiness which led in after life to his being so often placed in the responsible offices of tutor and curator by his friends. He accepted the situation of a clerk in another mercantile house, in which he continued till he began business for himself in the year 1801.

By the Divine blessing on his industry, truthfulness, prudence, integrity, and honour, he ere long placed himself in those most enviable of all worldly circumstances, in which a man possesses enough for every useful and desirable purpose, while he is unencumbered with multiplicity of affairs or superfluity of wealth. In these circumstances, though not without meeting with

serious losses, he continued through life, holding a high place in the estimation of the mercantile community and his fellow-citizens generally, "providing things honest," honourable, "in the sight of all men." He had extended views of the duty of a man in social and civil life—and without stepping out of his own station, was ever ready to help forward the improvement of our institutions, whether municipal or national, as well as to promote the best interests of all with whom by whatever tie he was connected. It would not be easy to say to how many, and to what extent, he has been useful, by his prudent advice, his kind cautions, his extensive influence, and his pecuniary assistance.

His mother was a member of the Established Church, as his father had been, and on returning from the country, as a matter of course, he attended public worship with her. But his maternal uncle, Mr. John Gordon, a member of the Baptist church, under the care of Messrs. M'Lean, Braidwood, and H. D. Inglis—honoured names—"good ministers of Jesus Christ"—took his young nephew not unfrequently along with him to their meetings, both on the Lord's day and on week-day evenings: and he has stated, that in his own apprehension he owed under

God his first clear spiritual apprehensions and deep spiritual impressions to the discourses of Mr. M'Lean—"a man mighty in the Scriptures." The hymns sung at those meetings took a very strong hold of his mind and heart; and late in life he used to repeat and even sing them to his grandchildren with great and obvious delight.[1]

[1] The following was one of these Hymns which had lodged themselves so deep in his memory, because lodged so deep in his heart:—

"Come, ye souls by sin afflicted,
Bow'd with fruitless sorrow down;
By the broken law convicted,
Through the Cross behold the crown!
Look to Jesus!
Mercy flows through Him alone.

"Take His easy yoke and wear it,
Love will make obedience sweet;
Christ will give you strength to bear it,
While His wisdom guides your feet
Safe to glory,
Where His ransom'd captives meet.

"Blessed are the eyes that see Him,
Bless'd the ears that hear His voice,
Blessed are the souls that trust Him,
And in Him alone rejoice:
His commandments
Then become their happy choice.

Towards the close of his apprenticeship, a friend asked him to come and hear *his* minister, the Rev. James Hall, who had a few years before become the minister of the newly erected Associate congregation of Rose Street. His manner of stating and enforcing Christian truth, which was that of an eloquent Christian orator, had strong charms for his youthful hearer. He returned Sabbath after Sabbath, and determined to remain under his ministry. He was admitted into fellowship with this congregation in the year 1790, in the 17th year of his age, and very soon fixed the fatherly regard of his minister,

"Sweet as home to pilgrims weary,—
Light to newly open'd eyes,—
Flowing springs in deserts dreary:—
Is the rest the Cross supplies;
All who taste it
Shall to rest immortal rise.

"But to sing the Rest of glory,
Mortal tongues far short must fall;
Tongues celestial strive to reach it,
But it soars beyond them all:
Faith believes it, Hope expects it, Love desires it;
But it overwhelms them all."

It is No. 190 in the United Presbyterian Hymn Book. Other special favourites were Nos. 25, 48, 103, 175, 336, 339, and 439.

which on the part of his young friend was met with a peculiar depth of reverential affection—the strength and steadiness of which were tried and stood the trial.

It was soon after this that he declined the flattering offer made by the heirs of his employer, the wine merchant. The principal cause of this rose out of the strong religious influence he had been brought under. Like many young converts, he felt a wish to abandon worldly pursuits and devote life to the calling of others to participate in the blessings of the Christian salvation: and while scrupulously attentive to his secular duties, he contrived at spare hours to obtain a considerable knowledge of the Latin language, and other branches of knowledge, as preparatory to his commencing sacred studies. He found, however, reason to believe, that it was the will of the Lord that he should "abide in the calling wherein he was called," and not without some regret abandoned a hope which had been very dear to him. It was good that it was in his heart; and God rewarded him, by giving him the satisfaction of seeing two of his sons successfully occupying important positions in the work of the Gospel.

In the end of the year 1806 he was called

by his fellow church members, and in the beginning of 1807 ordained, to the office of a ruling elder. For the long course of forty-seven years has he filled that office, during more than twenty-five of which I have had the satisfaction of sitting in session with him. His piety, prudence, good temper, kindly affection for the flock, love of the brotherhood, public spirit, and active habits, made him a very valuable office-bearer, both in the session, and in the oversight of the districts of the congregation committed to his care. In his attentions to the poor he was peculiarly exemplary. Throughout life, next to the concerns of his business and family, and often before them, those of the church over which he was an elder engaged his interest.

This congregation has been deeply indebted to him, in the management of their secular as well as strictly ecclesiastical business. In 1802 he was elected our treasurer, and continued for forty-one years to perform most honourably the duties of that office. On him singly for some short time rested the entire pecuniary responsibilities of the congregation, at that time heavy, and to him more than to any other individual do we owe the advantage which we feel every Lord's day, of performing our acts of solemn public worship in a structure so commodious.

While most faithful in the regards due to the Christian community with which he was connected, Mr. Renton cherished the spirit of a most enlightened and extended Christian liberality. Of all the great works of Christian benevolence which give a character to our age—the cause of the Bible, missions and education—he was an active and liberal supporter.

As soon as he had the prospects of maintaining a family, he wisely entered into the marriage relation with one "like-minded" with himself. By her, God was pleased to give him a large portion of what David emphatically calls "God's heritage"—children—who have been a source of great enjoyment to him in life and in death. His happy wife is now his sorrowful widow—but though cast down, not destroyed—believing him "not lost but gone before," and hoping ere long to follow him. In his domestic relations he was in a remarkable degree estimable and amiable. What he was as a son, a husband, a father, a brother, and a friend, they only fully know who stood in these relations to him; but to all who had opportunity of witnessing his conduct in the circles in which a man's true character is best seen, it was evident that few men by nature and by grace were better fitted for giving and receiv-

ing that purest of all kinds of earthly happiness which rises out of the exercise of the affections, and the performance of the offices of relationship and friendship.

To the three ministers under whom he sat, he manifested uniformly an affectionate regard. He helped them with his prayers, guarded their reputation as if it had been his own, often spoke with interest of the discourses he heard from them, and not unfrequently wrote to his son in the ministry of what had peculiarly struck and interested him in the Sabbath services.

These exterior manifestations of character had their source in a deep-seated principle of religious faith and Christian piety. He held the great distinctive principles of evangelical truth, with an intelligent and firm belief—and it was these which had formed him to the character by which he was distinguished. His piety, though most unobtrusive, was sincere and deep—manifesting itself in the way in which he received and endured "the chastisement of which all the children are partakers," in his deportment in the public offices of religion, and in his devotional exercises in the family and social circle.

Possessing a vigorous, though not robust constitution, and a cheerful affectionate disposi-

tion, advancing years made less impression on him than on most men, and we could scarcely allow ourselves to believe, that in the ordinary course of things, age, if not accident or disease, must ere long deprive us of one so esteemed and beloved. But for some time past the infirmities of the years beyond "the threescore years and ten" have been obviously multiplying. These were most meekly borne: and the waning energies of his nature were all as it were instinctively devoted to what had been the business and the delight of his more vigorous years. In the cause of religion, especially in the denomination, and still more specially in the congregation with which he was connected, in the cause of general benevolence, in the improvement of our own political institutions, and in the progress of truth and righteousness, liberty, and peace among mankind, he took a fervent interest to the last.

But his chief thoughts were devoted to inward intercourse with the unseen and Eternal. During the last six weeks of his life, one who spent the greater part of each day with him testifies, that "there passed no day without solemn, spontaneous, and generally very cheerful references to death or heaven—to Jesus or the resurrection." The last Sabbath he was with us was

our last communion, and I have reason to know it was to him a day of great spiritual enjoyment, one of "the days of heaven on the earth;" and on the last Sabbath of his life he spent the hours which we were spending in public worship, in hearing the Scriptures with Scott's Commentary, which was a favourite book with him, read by a son who resided with him, and in listening to some of his favourite hymns which he wished repeated again and again.[1]

He spent his last evening on earth in the midst of his family, and, in asking a blessing at supper,[2] poured out earnest supplications in be-

[1] Particularly the 25th and 48th in the Hymn Book.

[2] Regarding this, his last approach to the footstool with his family, the circumstances were these:—At the ordinary hour for family worship, nine o'clock, the bell had summoned us together, and I had conducted it, realizing much our peculiar circumstances with reference to the occasion of our meeting and the prospective separation on the morrow. After it we separated until supper, when William should join us, which was not till after ten. On taking our places around the table, my father, who was usually short in asking a blessing, began with unusual solemnity, and proceeded, at a length altogether unwonted for him, and with great tenderness, to offer up petitions, as if he had been conducting worship, very appropriate to our situation, and concluded with one for myself, ending with the whole words of the promise to

half of them all, especially of his eldest surviving son, who, to restore health impaired by public service, was expected to leave next morning for a foreign country. He retired to rest apparently in his ordinary health. At midnight the intimation was made, "The Master is come and calleth for thee;" and after two hours of suffering, from an affection of the heart, at an early hour of next morning, amid the prayers and tears of his affectionate family—having "served his generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep." With long life God had satisfied him—and now, we doubt not, He has shewed him His salvation. He expired just as his son concluded a prayer for him, realizing John Howe's ideal of a happy death, "dying amidst the kind relatives and friends, who were not ill pleased we lived, breaths mingling and ascending together in prayers and praises to the blessed Lord of heaven and earth—the God of our lives." Who would not covet such a death? But it is not for us to choose, but to "refer ourselves to God's holy pleasure, who will dispose of us.

Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 15. Such an impression and restraint were laid upon all our spirits by this exercise, that the supper proceeded in silence, until broken by a cheerful remark of his own.—H. R.

living and dying, in the best, the wisest, and the kindest way."

We might have wished to have had from him a verbal testimony of his unaltered faith in Christ, his continued committing of his all to Him till that day, and his persuasion that He would keep that which he had committed to Him. But it was not necessary; we had the testimony of more than sixty years of consistent Christian profession. He was indeed "an epistle of Christ Jesus seen and read of all men."

The aged pilgrim had for some time been waiting on the banks of "the river, over which there is no bridge," in the daily expectation of a summons to pass over to the better country. The message came with the token, as Bunyan says, of "an arrow sharpened with love to be let into the heart"—and scarcely was the message delivered, and the token exhibited, than the ministering spirit hurried him onwards, so that instead of wading through the deep waters and conflicting with their billows, he seemed wafted over them, and found himself ere he was aware on the other side, in "the land of the living"—the true "land of Immanuel."

This succinct narrative is replete with important lessons to all, and especially to young

men, and I leave it under God's blessing to do its appropriate work. May God supply the blank the removal of our friend has made in the church—in the world—and in the circle of his relations and friends. May He raise up to us in succeeding years a succession of such office-bearers; may our country and city be blessed with many such citizens; may his bereaved widow, the faithful companion of more than half a century, be sustained, and comforted, and enabled to say in her heart, "God lives; blessed be my rock." "My Maker is my husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name." And may God, instead of the father take the children; may all his children, and all his children's children, know his God and make him theirs, and serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind; and may pure religion and undefiled be perpetuated among his descendants to the latest generation.

"Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men." "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." "The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength"—a rare exceptional case—"they be fourscore years, yet is the addition but

labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O Lord! how long? O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it." Our comfort amid all bereavements is, "The word of the Lord abideth"—"Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

J. & J. H. Rutherfurd, Printers, Kelso.

MINUTE OF SESSION.

Broughton Place Session House,
11*th February* 1855.

The Session assembled between sermons. The Rev. Dr. Thomson, moderator, in the chair.

Intelligence having been received of the removal from this world, by death, of William Renton, Esq., the father of the Session, they engaged in prayer in acknowledgment of the Divine hand in this new bereavement. Thereafter they unanimously agreed to record in their minutes their deep sense of the loss they had sustained in the death of one so honoured, trusted, and beloved. At the same time they felt constrained to mingle with their sorrow thanksgivings to God for his long continuance in the ranks of the Eldership; for the numerous and valuable benefits they and the congregation have derived from his wise counsels, his peaceful, benignant temper, and ungrudging activity; for the unblemished life by which he advanced at once his profession as a Christian, and his

office as an Elder; and for his public spirit and enlightened patriotism by which he long ranked among the most honoured citizens of Edinburgh, having a "good report of all men, and of the truth itself." The earliest records of the congregation bear testimony to his many efforts and generous sacrifices for its advantage, and its minutes during all the many intervening years, when similar efforts and sacrifices were no longer needed, attest that his interest in Broughton Place Church burned on to the last moment of his life. The Session agreed to express their sympathy with her, whom this bereavement has made a widow, and with those many children and grandchildren who are wounded by the stroke; rejoicing at the same time that his lessons and example had so often told them where to look for comfort. Mr. Renton has been cut down, but the shock of corn was fully ripe, and those who knew him best will believe the most firmly that Christ has gathered the ripe fruit into his heavenly garner.

The clerk was instructed to make an extract of this Minute, and send it by Messrs. Young and Dewar, Elders, to Mrs. Renton and family.

Extracted from minutes of Broughton Place Session by

ALEX. WHITE, *Session Clerk.*

ERRATA

P. xii., line 10, *for* "To this is subjoined," *read* To these are subjoined.

P. 6, line 16, *for* "fomer," *read* former.

P. 17, line 7 from foot, *for* "old," *read* Old.

P. 19, line 2 from foot, *for* "it seemed to her," *read* it seemed to my mother.

P. 44, line 6, *for* "generation, her brother, and," *read* generation and her brother, and by.

P. 135, line 11 from foot, *for* "secede," *read* recede.

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